

Edited by
Christine Göttler and
Wolfgang Neuber

Spirits Unseen

The Representation of Subtle Bodies
in Early Modern European Culture



~~Intersections~~

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BRILL

Spirits Unseen

Intersections

Yearbook for Early Modern Studies

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Illustration on the cover: A magic lantern (detail), *Apparentia nocturna ad terrorem videntium* ('Nocturnal appearance for the fright of the spectators'). From Giovanni Fontana, *Bellicorum instrumentorum liber*, Cod. Icon. 242, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, ca. 1420–1440, fol. 70r.
(For more detailed information see pages 78 and 79 of this volume.)

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The idea for this collection of essays originated in two separate book projects that address specific shapes and kinds of 'spirits'. Christine Göttler has been studying the imagery and imagination of the other world and as well as the artistic media, materials and techniques employed to depict such virtual and immaterial worlds. Wolfgang Neuber has done extensive research in the field of early modern spectres and the ways in which they displayed themselves, were perceived, described and recognised. Both book projects are scheduled for publication in 2008.

It has been a particularly rewarding experience to share our interest in the still unexplored realms of spirits, spectres and subtle substances with scholars working in related fields. We would like to express our gratitude to Karl Enenkel (Leiden), general editor of *Intersections*, for his encouragement and to the editorial board for accepting the collection of essays for publication. The book could not have been completed in a timely fashion without the help and assistance of Sina Nikolajew (Berlin) in the final preparation of the manuscript. It has been our good fortune to work with Boris van Gool and Gera van Bedaf (Leiden); their patience, support and commitment have benefited the book through all stages of the production. Our very special thanks are, however, due to the authors of this anthology who, through their contributions and ideas, have made this project an insightful and 'spirited' experience.

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PREFACE

VAPOURS AND VEILS: THE EDGE OF THE UNSEEN

Christine Göttler

In medieval and early modern culture ‘spirits’ (*spiritus*) or ‘subtle bodies’ (*corpora subtilia*) were frequently pictured as vapours or gaseous substances as indeed the words ‘spirits’ and ‘vapours’ (*vapores*) were used interchangeably in physiological and medical language. The imagery of vapours and fumes indicated both – the airy, volatile, highly refined and subtle quality of ‘spirits’ in distinction to ordinary matter and the liminal place of ‘subtle bodies’, at the threshold of the incorporeal and immaterial realms, at the very edge of the visible, perceptible and tangible.

The images and attributes suggested for *spiritus* in Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* – a reference book ‘about how to form and explain symbolic concepts’, first published in Rome in 1593 and then in an augmented and illustrated version in 1603 – may shed some light on problems linked with this in-between state around 1600. Ripa mentions the vapours and spirits performing vital functions in man in his allegory of sleep. He suggests representing *sonno* in various ways, among others as a young man ‘with wings at the shoulders holding with his right hand a cornucopia from which vapour rises’. The horn of plenty ‘demonstrates that sleep is caused by vapours which, rising to the brain, change it and by that means disperse’, while ‘the wings and the youthful age show the swiftness of sleep and the delight of the hours spent sleeping’.¹

Ripa expands here on a passage in Vincenzo Cartari’s *Imagini degli dei*, first published in Venice in 1556. The illustrated versions of this handbook about the ancient gods and myths include, in the section on night

¹ Ripa C., *Iconologia ovvero descrizione di diverse imagini cavate dall’antichità, e di propria invention* (Hildesheim-New York: 1970) 464f.: ‘Un Giovane con l’ali alle spalle, che con la destra mano tenghi un Cornucopia, onde esca fumo [...] Il cornucopia di cui esce di fumo, dimostra la cagione del sonno essere i vapori, i quali salendo alla testa, lo cangiano, & per mezzo di esso si risolvano [...] L’ali, & l’età giovenile dimostrano la velocità del sonno, & la piacevolezza dell’hore, che dormendo si spendono.’

and sleep, a woodcut depicting the young Morpheus with a horn from which smoke rises, denoting the variety of dreams.² While the chapter on sleep in the 1603 edition of Ripa's *Iconologica* is not illustrated, a drawing by Karel van Mander (1548–1606), now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes, employs Ripa's iconography of vapour and smoke for a complex allegory of night closely based on Ovid's description of the cavern of Sleep (Somnus) in the eleventh chapter of the *Metamorphoses* [Fig. 1].³ The composition is dominated by the youthful winged figure of Morpheus – one of Somnus's 1000 children – reclining on a cloudy bank and holding two horns of plenty from which vapours of smoke escape; winged putti or airy 'spiritelli' emerge in between the clouds, some of them preoccupied in producing – with brush and palette – the evanescent images of dreams. In his *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished*, the author and traveller George Sandys speaks of 'images which are formed in our sleepes by the various discursion of the spirits in the braine [...] which follow concoction, when the blood is least troubled, and the phantasy uninterrupted by ascending vapors'.⁴ Dispersed by the personification of Morpheus's two horns, the vapours emanate, in the first instance, from the head of an old bearded man characterised by the bent elbow of his left arm as Saturnian or melancholic. This is Somnus – the father of Morpheus – who, as van Mander himself mentions in his *Schilder-Boeck*, first published in Harlem in 1604, sleeps soundly in a cavern deep in the earth.⁵ The three poppies in his left

² I have been using the following edition: Cartari V., *Le imagini [...] degli dei* [Venice: 1571] (New York-London: 1976) 336, 339–344.

³ Van Mander's *Allegory of Night* was engraved by Jacob Matham as part of a series of *The Four Times of the Day*: Leesberg M., *Karel van Mander*, ed. H. Leeftang and C. Schuckman, *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450–1700* (Rotterdam: 1999) cix, no. 34 (van Mander's drawing), 179–81, no. 159 (Matham's print). Van Mander's drawing and the woodcut depicting 'Night' and 'Sleep' in Cartari's *Imagini degli dei* are discussed in Cole M., "The Demonic Arts and the Origin of the Medium", *Art Bulletin* 84 (2002) 621–640, here 627–29.

⁴ Sandys G., *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologiz'd And Represented in Figures. An Essay to the Translation of Virgil's Aeneis* (Oxford: 1632) 396.

⁵ Mander K. van, *Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, ed. H. Miedema, 2 vols. (Utrecht: 1973) I 180–181 (VI.70): 'Om veel meer te doen/tot deser matery/Mochtmen wel dalen ter dieper speloncken/| Seer wijdt van hier/ergens by den Cymery;| Daer Morpheus Vader heeft zijn imperry/| En met zijn droomen pleeght te ligghen roncken [...].'
The *Grondt* is the first part of the *Schilder-Boeck*. Van Mander also refers to the cave of Somnus in the last part of the *Schilder-Boeck*: *Wilegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis* (Harlem: 1604) f. 97v (chapter XI): 'Des Slaep Godts aerdt en wooninghe/zijn oock van onsen Poet seer aerdigh beschreven: daer nae gheeft hy hem duysent kinderen/waer by een groot ghetal is te verstaen: maer hy en noemt maer dry van



Fig. 1. Karel van Mander, *Allegory of Night*, ca. 1610, pen and brown ink, blue wash, 18.3 × 28.9 cm. Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, inv. 794-1-2550.

hand reference the narcotic qualities of sleep. Resting in a cave-like structure, tended by spirits and watched by two owls, he is set apart from the other sleepers not haunted or comforted by dreams.⁶

Now Ripa suggests using a different iconography in representations of other kinds of spirits connected with the divine rather than medical-physiological spheres. The rational soul as well as the souls separated from their bodies and residing in heaven or hell, respectively, should be portrayed with their faces covered by 'very fine' (*finissimo*), 'very subtle' (*sottilissimo*) and transparent (*trasparente*) veils [Fig. 2]; in the case of the 'damned soul' the colour of the veil should be black. Ripa puts forward the views of 'the theologians', especially Augustine's treatise *On the Soul* (*De anima*), to explain that both the embodied and disembodied souls are 'pure incorporeal' and 'immortal substances', comparable to the substances of God and the angels. The veil signifies that the rational soul is 'invisible to corporeal eyes and the substantial form [or informing substance] of the body'.⁷ However, while unseen by our eyes, pure spirits should be represented 'in that best way that a human being dependent on the corporeal senses can understand [them] by means of the imagination'. The motif of the 'very subtle veil' is particularly appropriate since 'subtlety' (*subtilitas*) – the quality that distinguishes spiritual substance from ordinary matter – means in the literal sense, as the scholar and rhetorician Julius Caesar Scaliger asserts in his 1557 *Esoteric Exercises on Subtlety* (*Exercitationes exotericæ de*

de besonderste/te weten/*Morpheus*, welcken beteeckent ghedaent/ofte beeldt: *Icelus*, oft *Phobetor*, schricklijcke ghelijcknis: en *Phantasus*, oft inbeeldinghe.' For the cavern of Sleep, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XI 593–616. As far as I know the reference to van Mander's texts has not yet been made.

⁶ Van Mander's invention seems to be partially based on another image of sleep suggested by Ripa C., *Iconologia* 464: 'Huomo corpolento, & grave, vestito di pelle di Tasso, stando sopra un letto di papavero, & una vita carica d'uva matura gli farà ombra, & haverà una grotta vicina, ove si veda un zambollo d'acqua.'

⁷ Ripa C., *Iconologia* 21–22: 'Anima ragionevole e beata. Donzella gratiosissima, haverà il volto coperto con un finissimo, e trasparente velo, il vestimento chiaro, & lucente, à gl'homeri un paro d'ale, & nella cima del capo una stella. Benche l'anima, come si dice da' Teologi, sia sustanza incorporea, & immortale, si rappresenta nondimeno in quel miglior modo, che l'huomo legato à quei sensi corporei con l'imaginazione, la può comprendere, & non altrimenti, che si sogli rappresentare Iddio, & gl'Angeli, ancorche siano pure sustanze incorporee [...] Se gli fa velato il viso per dinotare, che ella è, come dice S. Agostino nel lib. de definit. anim. sustanza invisibile à gl'occhi humani, e forma sustantiale del corpo, nel quale ella non è evidente, salvo che per certe attioni esteriori se comprende.'



Fig. 2. *The Rational or Blessed Soul*, woodcut, in Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (Rome: 1603) 22.

subtilitate), the very fine threads that in a delicate precious fabric (*tela*) flee from the sight.⁸

In Ripa's treatise, the finely woven transparent veil and the cornucopia filled with vapour and smoke refer to two kinds of *spiritus* that, however, not only share a common name but also common qualities and functions: Both the immortal soul and the perishable bodily vapour were thought of as substances much more rarefied, purified and subtle than ordinary solid matter, comparable to the more refined elements of fire or air. But, as demonstrated by the essays collected in this book, both *spiritus* and *subtilitas* were also interpreted in various and often contradictory ways in the medieval and early modern periods. Moreover, because of their similarities and resemblances, divine and medical spirits were often adventurously and haphazardly combined, mingled and confused.

Thomas Aquinas's brief remarks on 'spirit' and 'subtlety' in his *Commentary* on Peter Lombard's influential *Four Books of Sentences* (*Sententiarum libri quattuor*) provides a good picture of the broad and ambivalent meanings of *spiritus* in medieval medicine, cosmology, physics, theology and metaphysics. Aquinas's commentaries may also serve here as a point of departure to describe some of the contradictions, confusions and tensions associated with the term *spiritus* far into the modern age. The passage forms part of the tenth distinction on 'The Holy Spirit as Love' in the first part of Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, the Holy Spirit being the subtlest of all spirits, uniting 'as love' father and son. Peter Lombard's *Sentences* remained the official textbook for theology far into the early modern period (it was still used by Rabelais who enrolled at the University of Paris in the early 1500s). Aquinas's *Commentary*, written in the middle of the thirteenth century during his appointment at the University of Paris, was undoubtedly meant for classroom use.

Aquinas begins by introducing 'subtlety' (*subtilitas*) as a common characteristic of various kinds of 'spirits' (*spiritus*), including both corporeal and incorporeal substances and creatures: 'It should be said that "spirit" is a name imposed to signify the subtlety of some nature. Hence, it

⁸ Meier-Oeser S., "Subtilität", *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 10 (Basel: 1998) cols. 563–67, here 564. Scaliger's *Exercitationes* were written in response to *De subtilitate rerum* (*On the Subtlety of Things*) by Girolamo Cardano. See Maclean I. "The Interpretation of Natural Signs: Cardano's *De subtilitate* versus Scaliger's *Exercitationes*", in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. B. Vickers (Cambridge: 1984) 231–52.

is said of corporeal as well as incorporeal things.’ Similarly, Thomas defines *spiritus* first as the warming and vitalising breath, the air inhaled and exhaled by the lungs, air or wind in general, that is to say in the sense of *pneuma*, a key term in Galenic medicine and physiology. *Spiritus* may also signify the more noble elements of air and fire. Among the subtlest vapours, he further mentions the corporeal virtues and spirits that move inside the body and rule and regulate the operations of the human mind.⁹

Throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern period three types of bodily spirits, virtues, powers or faculties were distinguished, each of them performing different functions and tasks. The animal spirits, with their seat in the brain and their involvement in sense perception and movement were assigned a higher status than the natural and vital spirits occupying the liver and the heart, respectively.¹⁰ Involved in the functions of nutrition, respiration and sense perception, bodily spirits were subject to numerous dietary recommendations. Marsilio Ficino, in the highly influential treatise *De vita triplici* addressed to scholars, recommends pure air, wine, certain perfumes and music as effective means to cleanse the spirits and preserve their health.¹¹ The English Jesuit Henry More suggests similar measures to render the spirits more subtle and agile: ‘For *fasting, fresh Air, moderate Wine*, and all things that tend to an handsome supply and depuration of the *Spirits*, make our thoughts more free, subtle, and clear.’¹²

The more ‘subtle’ a corporeal substance is, the more it approaches what Aquinas and others defined as ‘spiritual substance’. Sight or the

⁹ Thomas de Aquino, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis*, ed. R.P. Mandonnet, 3 vols. (Paris: 1929–33) I 267f. (*In Lib. I Sententiarum* X 4): ‘Respondeo dicendum, quod spiritus est nomen positum ad significandum subtilitatem alicuius naturae; unde dicitur tam de corporalibus quam de incorporeis: aer enim spiritus dicitur propter subtilitatem; et exinde attractio aeris et expulsio dicitur inspiratio et respiratio; et exinde ventus etiam dicitur spiritus; et exinde etiam subtilissimi vapores, per quos diffunduntur virtutes animae in partes corporis, dicuntur spiritus [...]’ My translation is based on the translation by Peter A. Kwasniewski, *The Aquinas Translation Project*, DeSales University, <http://www4.desales.edu/~philtheo/loughlin/ATP/Sententiae/1Sentd10a4.html> [accessed 19 June 2007].

¹⁰ For the three different kinds of *spiritus*, see, among others, Harvey R.E., *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Warburg Institute Surveys 6 (London: 1975) 16–19.

¹¹ Walker D.P., *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, Studies of the Warburg Institute 22 (London: 1958) 1–11.

¹² More, H., *The Immortality of the Soul* (London: 1659). I cite from Walker D.P., ‘Medical Spirits and God and the Soul’, in Fattori M. – Bianchi M. (eds.), *Spiritus. IV Colloquio Internazionale del Lessico Intellettuale Europeo, Atti* (Rome: 1984) 222–244, here 239.

visual spirit, while still corporeal, was considered to be the subtlest and noblest among the animal spirits, of fiery nature and extremely volatile. Aquinas relates spirits to the effects of friendship and mutual affection;¹³ he does not, in his discussion on the love of the Holy Spirit, expand on the role of the animal spirits in more profane matters of love as, for example, the violent agitation of the spirits provoked by the sight of stunning beauty. It was further the still corporeal, but most rarefied and subtle animal spirits, that were considered to have a particular affinity to – and were occasionally confused and identified with – the substance of the soul.

Aquinas, however, emphatically emphasises the incorporeality of the rational soul, angels and God, the subtlest spirits, which he lists in a hierarchical order.¹⁴ God and the angels are purely spiritual substances, while the rational soul – because of its involvement with the body – is generally thought of as inferior. Asserting, on the one hand, that ‘spirituality’ (*spiritualitas*) ‘is found by priority in God, and more in incorporeal things than in corporeal ones’, Thomas wonders, on the other hand, whether *spiritus* and *spiritualitas* would not apply more to corporeal things, because their subtlety is more manifest to us.¹⁵

The question of where matter ends and where pure spirit begins was answered differently by various authors. Like the substance of the ‘rational’ or ‘separated’ soul, the ‘bodies’ of pure and immortal spirits – angels, demons, separated souls – have yet again motivated contradictory theories and images. Were angels and devils pure spirits that assumed virtual bodies composed of a particular kind of air ‘condensed by divine power’ as Thomas Aquinas states? Or did they have airy or fiery bodies as suggested by Augustine and therefore were ‘without body and without

¹³ Thomas de Aquino, *Scriptum* 267: ‘Et inde est etiam quod dicimus duos homines amantes se, et concordēs, esse unius spiritus vel conspiratos; sicut etiam dicimus eos esse unum cor et unam animam [...]’

¹⁴ Thomas de Aquino, *Scriptum* 267: ‘[...] et similiter incorporea propter suam subtilitatem dicuntur spiritus; sicut dicimus Spiritum Deum, et angelum, et animam [...]’

¹⁵ Thomas de Aquino, *Scriptum* 268: ‘Subtilitas autem dicitur per remotionem a materialitate; unde ea quae habent multum de materia vocamus grossa, sicut terram, et ea quae minus, subtilia, sicut aerem et ignem. Unde cum removeri a materia magis sit in incorporeis, et maxime in Deo, spiritualitas secundum rationem significationis suae per prius invenitur in Deo, et magis in incorporeis quam in corporalibus; quamvis forte secundum impositionem nominis spiritualitas magis se teneat ad corporalia, eo quod nobis qui nomina imposuimus, eorum subtilitas magis est manifesta.’

matter, but not completely so’?¹⁶ Another issue of contention concerned the ‘quasi-body’ of the disembodied soul. Combining Galenic, Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, Dante, in a famous passage in *Purgatorio* 25, describes the formation of the ‘fictitious’ or ‘ethereal’ body of the soul once it has left the fleshly body at the moment of death. Separated from its body, the soul functions once more as the informing power of a body made by ‘air full of moisture’ and ‘adorned with various colours by another’s rays reflected in it’.¹⁷

From antiquity until far into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries bodily spirits were variously and contradictorily defined as medium, vehicle, instrument or engine of the soul; as the ‘garment’ (*indumentum*) of the soul;¹⁸ the ‘bond’ (*vinculum*) that fastens together or ‘mutually connects’ distant natures such as the earthly body and the heavenly soul;¹⁹ and, as ‘spiritus mundi’, the link between the celestial and corporeal worlds.²⁰ Expressions such as ‘thin and subtle body’, ‘lucid and ethereal body’, ‘subtle vapour’ and ‘fine and spiritual corpuscle’ (*corpusculum tenue et spiritale*)²¹ referenced the double affinities of *spiritus* with both corporeal and incorporeal substances, the link, but also the confusions and contaminations between ‘physical and natural’ and ‘incorporeal spirits’ such as the soul. Spirits or subtle bodies thus functioned as intermediaries and agents between two opposite worlds whose borders continually shifted and changed. As argued by the authors of the articles gathered in this book, the divisions between what was perceptible and what was not were not clearly defined; moreover, there were contradictory ideas about the actual ‘substance’ or nature, the properties and virtues of

¹⁶ Stephens W., *Demon Lovers. Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago-London: 2002) 62; Peers G., *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: 2001) 1–11; Marshall P. – Walsham A., “Migrations of Angels in the Early Modern World”, in Marshall P. – Walsham A. (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: 2006) 1–40.

¹⁷ Dante, *Purgatorio* XXV, 100–105.

¹⁸ Garin E., “Il termine ‘spiritus’ in alcune discussioni fra Quattrocento e Cinquecento”, in Garin E. (ed.), *Umanisti, artisti, scienziati* (Rome: 1989) 295–303, here 299.

¹⁹ Pico della Mirandola G., “Heptaplus”, in Pico della Mirandola G., *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e scritti vari*, ed. E. Garin (Florence: 1942) 270 (IV, 1): ‘Verum inter terrenum corpus et caelestem animi substantiam opus fuit medio vinculo, quod tam distantes naturas invicem copularet.’

²⁰ On the *spiritus mundi*, see Klier G., *Die drei Geister des Menschen. Die sogenannte Spirituslehre in der Physiologie der Frühen Neuzeit*, Sudhoffs Archiv, Beiheft 50 (Stuttgart: 2002) 27–28.

²¹ Pico della Mirandola G., “Heptaplus” 270 (IV, 1).

spirits. As further explored in this book, distinctions such as spiritual and physical seeing as well as the rational and sensitive or corporeal soul designate spirits at the opposite ends of the spectrum, either in their purest form or of coarser, though still subtle composition.

It is not the aim of the present volume to trace the early modern history of the term *spiritus* with its many derivatives and vulgar translations. Rather, the authors of the articles collected in this book ask after specific meanings and uses of *spiritus* in a variety of historical settings and disciplinary fields: in physiology, psychology, alchemy, theology, demonology, art theory, music theory and the literature on love. What images and metaphors were employed to describe the values and qualities of various kinds of spirits or the tasks specific spirits performed? Some of the authors address moments of crisis when, due to developments in theology, moral philosophy and natural philosophy, common notions of *spiritus* were adapted, adjusted, transformed, and, occasionally, redefined; or, as also shown, continued to be invoked.

The protagonist of some of the essays is the visual spirit as the swiftest and traditionally, but not undisputedly, least corporeal and ‘noblest’ of all spirits. In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there were increasingly contested and contradictory views about vision and sight as well as the status and definition of images, pictures, ghostly appearances, visions and dreams. By what means and in which forms did ghosts, angels or demons reveal themselves to human eyes or make themselves audible? Similarly, there were problems of definition and identification – ghostly appearances could be regarded as souls from purgatory, good or bad angels, true or false visions or deceptive images produced by demons, magicians, mathematical-optical tricks or by the power of the imagination. Fraud and deception are central themes in early modern treatises on preternatural and supernatural phenomena and are also addressed in this volume.²²

Sympathies and antipathies were frequently used distinctions in early modern treatises on natural philosophy to refer to the hidden correspondences and qualities that link and connect things and occurrences in the corporeal, sublunar and divine worlds; the broad uses of these terms are explored in this book. Various authors further investigate notions

²² For definitions of the preternatural and the supernatural, see Daston L. – Park K., *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 1150–1750 (New York: 1998) 121f. (with references to a passage in Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa contra gentiles*, book three).

of *spiritus* in theories of artistic creativity and the efficacy of the visual and performative arts. Just as the artist's work with brush and palette was understood as a mode of alchemical practice, the effects of music were compared to the conversions, transformations and transmutations performed by alchemists, witches and wizards. Spirits, with their broad range of definitions, uses and interpretations are among the subjects ideally suited to studies that bridge geographical and cultural divides and transverse disciplinary boundaries. While the essays presented in this book were written independently by historians in a variety of fields – philosophy, science, literature, art and music – the spirits, vapours and subtle bodies conjured by the authors share similar qualities and functions, and may hopefully engage the spirits of the reader to continue speculation.

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POLTERGEIST THE PREQUEL:
ASPECTS OF OTHERWORLDLY DISTURBANCES
IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

Wolfgang Neuber

A poltergeist is a 'spirit unseen' in the strict sense of the word. It can neither be seen nor felt (e.g., by a draught or a sudden chilliness of the air) but is perceived only acoustically. The word, which as one of rather few borrowings from the German has entered the English language, seems to be an early modern creation. The 'Deutsches Wörterbuch' by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm names Martin Luther and Erasmus Alberus as evidence of its earliest occurrence.¹ 'Rumpelgeist' (rumbling spirit) is a German variant of 'Poltergeist', whose Latin equivalent is 'larva' or, more frequently used in early modern times, 'lemur'; both terms signify the spirit of a deceased person. Other variants can be found in Johann Heinrich Zedler's 'Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon'. Zedler does not explain 'Poltergeist' in itself, but directs the reader to the general headword 'Spectrum' and then explains that for this word at times the expressions 'Kobolt, Poltergeist, Ungethüm, Ungeheuer'² (imp, poltergeist, monster, ogre) are used as German synonyms.

For an explanation why 'poltergeist' seems to be an early modern word, one has to take a look at the history of theology.³ In his treatise 'De cura pro mortuis gerenda'⁴ (420/22) St. Augustine states that the spirits of the deceased cannot move or appear freely but require the mediation of angels or demons. It is, however, not the body or the soul that appears. If angels impart the apparition, an 'imago' occurs;

¹ Grimm J. – Grimm W., *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 3: N – Qurren (Leipzig: 1889, repr. Munich: 1984) col. 1990.

² Zedler J.H., *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon*, 38: Sk – Spie (Leipzig-Halle: 1743, repr. Graz: 1962) col. 1372.

³ Neuber W., 'Die Theologie der Geister in der Frühen Neuzeit', in Baßler M. – Gruber B. – Wagner-Egelhaaf M. (eds.), *Gespenster. Erscheinungen – Medien – Theorien* (Würzburg: 2005) 25–37.

⁴ Augustinus, 'S. AURELII AUGUSTINI HIPPONENSIS EPISCOPI DE CURA PRO MORTUIS GERENDA AD PAULINUM', in *Patrologia Latina*, 40, col. 591–609.

if demons play along, it is a ‘*fantasma*’. Augustine regards dreaming as the – already scarce – normal case of such an apparition, not the state of being awake. Spirits then would have the form of an interior, not a sensual perception, as it is required for a poltergeist. Throughout the Middle Ages, however, this formerly widely accepted view changed thoroughly. The processes and circumstances responsible for this change cannot be discussed here.⁵ But as a result, spirits no longer displayed themselves exclusively to clerics but increasingly also to laymen; and they now could be perceived when being awake too. The term ‘poltergeist’ therefore, being a vernacular expression, would have sprung into being only when spirits could be experienced sensually – i.e., when one was not dreaming – and when such apparitions would be frequent with people not using Latin as their primary language. Above all, three literary genres structure the ever increasing appearance of spirits in the late Middle Ages: firstly, miracles, secondly, ‘*mirabilia*’, and thirdly, examples in homily.

The more widely and often spirits could be experienced, the more important was it to understand whether they came from God or the demons. Following the biblical paradigm of the ‘*discretio spirituum*’,⁶ numerous treatises have dealt with this matter since the 14th century. Heinrich’s of Friemar (ca. 1245–1340) ‘*De quatuor instinctibus*’ (oldest dated manuscript: Prague 1381),⁷ Heinrich’s of Langenstein (ca. 1340–1397) ‘*De discretione spirituum*’,⁸ or Jean Gerson’s (1363–1429) ‘*De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis*’⁹ and ‘*De probatione spirituum*’¹⁰ can be mentioned in this context. The tradition of these texts, which unfolds within the framework of Aristotelian scholasticism, continues until the end of the early modern period. In 1599/1600, the Jesuit Martin Delrio published his comprehensive ‘*Disquisitiones magicæ*’,¹¹

⁵ Schmitt J.-C., *Les revenants: les vivants et les morts dans la société médiévale* (Paris: 1994). English translation: Schmitt J.-C., *Ghosts in the Middle Ages. The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. T. Lavender Fagan, (Chicago-London: 1998).

⁶ Vgl. 1. Kor. 12,10; 1. Joh. 4,1.

⁷ Place and date of composition are unknown. The oldest dated manuscript is posthumous: 1381. Warnock R.G. – Zumkeller A., *Der Traktat Heinrichs von Friemar über die Unterscheidung der Geister. Lat.-mhd. Textausgabe m. Untersuchung* (Wurzburg: 1977).

⁸ Written 1382–84. Hohmann T., *Heinrich von Langenstein, Unterscheidung der Geister. Lat.-dt. Text m. Untersuchung* (Munich: 1977).

⁹ Written 1401.

¹⁰ Written 1415.

¹¹ I quote from the second edition; (Delrio M., SJ): *DISQUISITIONVM | MAGICARVM | LIBRI SEX, | IN TRES TOMOS | Partiti. [...] NVNC SECVNDIS*

which were printed 24 times until 1755. The publication, which was intended for the activities of the inquisition and the courts of justice, consists of six extensive books structured according to syllogistic conclusions and scholastic principles, and it contains an extensive discussion of spiritual apparitions.

In the second book Delrio deals with the question, *‘An ope demonum fieri possit, ut defunctorum animæ seu spiritus viuentibus appareant’*¹² – ‘If with the help of the demons the souls or spirits of the deceased can appear to the living’. He decides this question unambiguously: ‘Sit I. concl. quæ quasi fundamentum est ceterarum; *Posse ac solere mortuorum animas nonnunquam diuinâ potentiâ atque virtute, viuentibus apparere, id & fidei Catholicæ scitis, & veræ germanæque philosophiæ placitis consentaneum est*’¹³ – ‘The first conclusion shall be, quasi as a basis for the others: the spirits of the dead can and will sometimes appear through divine power and virtue, which is the consensual opinion both of those knowledgeable in the Catholic faith and genial in the true and genuine philosophy.’

He then progresses to the central question of the discretion of spirits, following St. Anthony: *‘Non est difficilis bonorum malorumque spirituum discretio. si enim post timorem successerit gaudium, à Domino sciamus venisse auxilium: si autem incussa formido permanserit, hostis est qui videtur’*¹⁴ – ‘The discretion of good and evil spirits is not difficult. For if fear is followed by elation we know that help has come from the Lord; but if the horror stirred up before persists, it is the enemy that appears’. The subsequent 21 folio-pages comprise textual sources documenting the apparitions of spirits from the 1st to the 16th centuries.¹⁵

The following section is dedicated to the classification of spirits,¹⁶ which mainly interest Delrio as demons since his work is a handbook for the prosecution of magical crimes: *‘De demonum apparitionibus, siue de spectris, quæ demones nobis obijciunt[!]’*¹⁷ – ‘On the apparition of demons, or on spectres, which the demons present to us’. Following the doctrine of

CVRIS AVCTIOR | longè, additionibus multis passim insertis: | correctior quoque mendis sublatis. | MOGVNTIAE, | Apud IOANNEM ALBINVM. | ANNO M.D.CIII. | Cum gratia & priuilegio. Cæs. Maiest. ad annos viginti. – All emphases in italics are Delrio’s.

¹² Delrio M., SJ, DISQVISATIONVM Lib. II. Quaestio XXVI. 193.

¹³ Delrio M., SJ, DISQVISATIONVM 193.

¹⁴ Delrio M., SJ, DISQVISATIONVM 203.

¹⁵ Delrio M., SJ, DISQVISATIONVM 206–227.

¹⁶ Delrio M., SJ, DISQVISATIONVM Quaestio XXVII. 231–254, esp. Sect. II. 235–254.

¹⁷ Delrio M., SJ, DISQVISATIONVM 231.

the four elements, Delrio locates demons in fire, air, earth, and water, but considers the notion of igneous spirits an invention.¹⁸ A further option for the classification of spirits arises from their ways of appearing; there are those averse to light, those that show up around noon, nettlers (*alastores*) and helpful spirits (imps, trolls, ships' kobolds), and finally spirits guarding treasures, which get mobilised by demons.

Considering these explanations, one might associate Delrio's elemental spirits with Paracelsian concepts. Paracelsus dedicates his doctrine of spirits in the first instance to the discretion of spirits, whereupon he counts seven orders that are structured according to the magically charged three-plus-four-model. Paracelsus discerns angels as the *spiritus coelestes*, the devils as *spiritus infernales*, and the spirits of the deceased as *spiritus humani*. The four categories of elemental spirits follow this triadic classification.

One might see analogies between Delrio and Paracelsus. But when it comes to the spirits of the dead, a clear difference is discernible which is based on theological doctrine. Delrio unambiguously makes a stand against what he calls the 'heresy of Paracelsus on the four *species* (shapes, guises) of man'. According to Paracelsus, man consists firstly of the *corpus materiale*, the elemental body or the so-called 'dead mummy', and secondly of the *corpus spirituale*. This is the astral body or the 'living mummy'. Apart from these two – and Delrio refers to the 'four *species*' of man that Paracelsus postulates – there are two more bodies which resemble the *corpus spirituale*. The first is the so-called 'evestrum', the shadow of the soul, which stays on earth after death, and which is endowed with prophetic powers. And then there is also 'trames', the shadow of reason and the senses; it can dissociate itself from the body and appear in mirrors or crystals. Evestrum and trames sometimes manifest themselves by rumbling or knocking, i.e., by acoustical signs. They would be proper poltergeists.

The *corpus spirituale* may also, in conjunction with the soul, go on living without the material body after the physical death of a person – until it is consumed by its ruling star so that it decays and decomposes. As long as it has not fully disaggregated, the astral body seeks shelter in the very place where the deceased person used to live. The astral body can be seen but is unable to speak. Especially in the case of a violent death the astral body lives on in the belief that what it does

¹⁸ Delrio M., SJ, DISQUISITIONVM 237.

spiritually is really done physically. One might say that it does not quite acknowledge the sudden loss of its elemental body. From this, prophetic ‘lemures’, poltergeists, and ‘caballes’, whose complexion indicates their moral condition, can be explained. Such spirits will appear especially if a person had been driven by evil passions, and it appears in order to give a warning to the living.

The difference between Delrio’s point of view and the Paracelsian doctrine of spirits seems quite evident. From the angle of scholastic theology, man does not have four bodies or ‘*species*’, but is composed dually of body and soul. The spirit of a deceased person can solely appear through divine or diabolic influence but not out of an existential orientation owing to the existence of an astral body. From Delrio’s viewpoint, accusing Paracelsus of heresy seems fully justified.

The difference between orthodox Catholics and all kinds of renegades or heretics cannot only be marked with regard to dogma, but also as far as the spirits’ social function and their appearance in various genres of texts is concerned.¹⁹ This is to affirm that not only Catholics were interested in spirits in the early modern period but also Protestants, and at least to the same degree. Johann Fischart’s ‘De magorum daemonomania’ (1591),²⁰ an adaptation of Jean Bodin’s ‘De la démonomanie des sorciers’²¹ (1580), is an almost coinstantaneous and functionally similar book as Delrio’s, serving the purposes of justice. As for the Jesuit, the existence of spirits is undisputed for the Calvinist. Like Delrio, Fischart needs to include a section on the ‘discretio spirituum’, sc. a chapter called ‘Vom vnderscheid/so sich zwischen Guten vnd Boesen Geistern erhelt’²² – ‘On the difference that exists between good and evil sprits’. May his examples differ clearly from those given by Delrio with regard to denominational polemics, the theological construction is the very

¹⁹ For a denominational reading of Grimmelshausen: Mahlmann-Bauer B., ‘Grimmelshausens Gespenster’, in *Simpliciana* XXVI (2004) 105–140.

²⁰ (Fischart J.), ‘DE MAGORVM DAEMONOMANIA. | Vom Außgelas=|nen Wütigen Teüffelsheer [...]. Mit Röm: Key: May: Freyheit auff zehen Jar. Getruckt zu Straßburg/bei Bernhart Jobin. 1591’. – Repr. under the title Bodin J., *Vom aussgelassenen wütigen Teuffelsheer. Übersetzt von Johann Fischart. Vorw. Hans Biedermann* (Graz: 1973).

²¹ Bodin J., ‘DE LA | DEMONOMANIE | DES SORCIERS. | A MONSEIGNEVR M. CHRE-|stofle de Thou Cheualier Seigneur de Cæli, premier Pre-|sident en la Cour de Parliament, & Conseiller | du Roy en son priuè Conseil. | PAR I. BODIN ANGEVIN. | A PARIS, | Chez Iaques du Puys Libraire Iuré, à la Samaritaine, | M. D. LXXX. | AVEC PRIVILEGE DV ROY’. – Repr. under the title Bodin J., *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (Hildesheim-Zürich-New York: 1988).

²² Fischart J., *Daemonomania* 17–25.

same: there are good and evil spirits, there are spirits that come from God, and spirits that are the result of demonic pretence and attempts at seduction.

Fischart's spirits, however, are endowed with a different social function and come from another genre of texts. They rather have the air of spook, or spectral appearances, similar to those described by Paracelsus. One spirit appeared 'einer gewissen Namhafften Person/so noch in leben'²³ ('to a certain renowned person who is still alive') and horrifies the man deeply. Even when the spirit made itself known, it frightened the 'renowned person' by making 'many bonny and mellifluous strokes on a vessel made of glass' ('sehr huepschlich vnnd lieblich viel streich an ein Glaeserin geschirr gethan').²⁴ To their utter horror, other persons can hear the good spirit's knocking too. Poltergeists are frightening, even if they may not be hostile at all and may have the best intentions. In a marginal note of the text it says furthermore: 'Die Engel geben sich mit Klopffzeichen zuerkennen'²⁵ – 'The angels make themselves known by knocking signs'. If the appearance of angels is a spooky matter as well, it is not surprising that a further marginal note deals with the 'Kunst ein gespenst auß dem Hauß zuvertreiben'²⁶ – 'the art of expelling a spectre from the house'.

It is important to notice that Fischart does not refer to the Bible or the patristic tradition in this context but describes cases that could be gathered from contemporaneous empirical evidence.²⁷ In other words: Fischart ties in with the medieval literary tradition of the 'mirabilia' mentioned above.

With Luther the case is quite similar. Especially the 'Tischreden' – in themselves exemplary narratives – give information on this matter. In one text, Luther recounts the story²⁸ of a woman of Magdeburg who was frequently at night disquieted 'a Manibus', i.e., by spirits of the dead. She expelled them by giving 'a big fart' ('ein großen furtz') and speaking: 'Sihe, Teuffel, do hab dir ein stab und gehe gen Rom zu deinem abgott! Et cessavit vexator' – 'Look, devil, take this walking-staff and go to Rome to your idol! And the vexing spirit vanished'.

²³ Fischart J., *Daemonomania* 12.

²⁴ Fischart J., *Daemonomania* 13.

²⁵ Fischart J., *Daemonomania* 15.

²⁶ Fischart J., *Daemonomania* 21.

²⁷ The quoted narratives are not in Bodin.

²⁸ Luther M., *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Tischreden*, 6 vols. (Graz: 1967) II 2411a.

Unsurprisingly, as was the case with St. Augustine, here Luther identifies a demonic appearance with the devil.

This perception runs through almost all spirit-narratives given by Luther,²⁹ who himself had repeatedly fallen prey to poltergeists. One narrative, dated 1540, recounts the following:

Von Polter Geystern. Osiander helt, das nichts sey mit den Poltergeistern. Daruff der Doctor gesagt: Ich halt, das was dran sey. Osiander mus altzeit was sonderlichs haben. Ich hab es erfahren propria experientia, den da ich ein mall muede war von meinen horis canonicis zu bethen, da hub sich ein gros gereusch hinter der hellen, das ich mechtig sere erschrack; da ich aber marckt, das des Teuffels spiel war, giengk ich zu betth vnd bath Gott [...].³⁰ – Of poltergeists. Osiander claims that poltergeists are nothing. Upon which the doctor said: I claim that there is something about them. Osiander must always have his own ways. I have experienced it myself, for once when I was tired from my canonical prayers, a big noise started from behind the stove so that I was scared mightily; but when I noticed that it was the devil's play, I went to bed and prayed to God [...].

On another occasion, narrated in the same context, Luther witnesses a massive rattling of pots; he again dares the devil and goes to sleep. Thirdly, again in the same passage, he recounts an occasion when on the Wartburg the devil started throwing nuts at him.

This is story more elaborately retold in another narrative of the 'Tischreden':

Als ich des Nachts zu Bette ging, zog ich mich in der Stuben aus, thät das Licht auch aus, und ging in die Kammer, legte mich ins Bette. Da kömmt mirs über die Haselnüsse, hebt an und quitz eine nach der andern an die Balken mächtig hart, rumpelt mir am Bette; aber ich fragte nichts darnach. Wie ich nun ein wenig entschlief, da hebts an der Treppen ein solches Gepolter an, als würfe man ein Schock Fässer die Treppen hinab; so ich doch wol wußte, daß die Treppe mit Ketten und Eisen wol verwahret, daß Niemand's hinauf konnte; noch fielen so viel Fasse hinunter. Ich stehe auf, gehe auf die Treppe, will sehen, was da sei; da war die Treppe zu. Da sprach ich: Bist du es, so sei es! Und befahl mich dem Herrn Christo [...] und legte mich wieder nieder ins Bette.³¹ – When I went to bed at night I took off my clothes in the parlour, put out the light too, and went into the chamber, lay down on the bed. There it comes upon the hazelnuts, starts, and bungs one after the other at the beams very hard, rumbles at my bed; but I did not care for it. When I

²⁹ Luther M., *Werke*, see the indices sub verbo 'Gespenst' and 'Poltergeist'.

³⁰ Luther M., *Werke* V 5358b.

³¹ Luther M., *Werke* VI 6816.

fell asleep a little, a helter-skelter starts at the stairs as if a threescore of barrels was thrown down the stairs; though I knew that the stairs were well coffered with chains and iron so that nobody could come up; still so many barrels kept falling down. I get up, go to the stairs, want to see what there might be; but the stairs were closed. So I spoke: If it is you, so be it! And commended myself to the Lord Christ [...], and went to bed again.

As can be seen from these passages, Luther seems to be a bit inconsistent in his phrasing. On the one hand we have the term ‘poltergeist’, on the other hand the phenomenon is always explained by devilish trickery. This duality is due to Luther’s Augustinian theology. Augustine ascribed the apparition of the spirits of the deceased to demonic activities. Luther follows this line of reasoning and largely uses ‘demon’ and ‘devil’ as synonyms.

Luther’s poltergeists – and, more generally, all his spectres – do not only serve as evidence for the devil’s sinister doings but have an immediate warning purpose in the same way as in Paracelsus and Fischart. Therefore, it is important to tell empirically established ghost stories with a didactic intention. One pertinent narrative by Luther recounts³² the apparition of a so-called ‘Gespenste und Ungeheuer’ (‘spectre and ogre’) in the Low Countries, a dog the size of a man. This dog would have taken a smell at people who would have died soon afterwards. ‘Die sterbende Leute hatten ihre Zuflucht auf Aberglauben, Superstition und Opffermessen’ – ‘The dying people resorted to false beliefs, superstition, and sacrificial masses’. The text does indeed not have Luther question the apparition in itself; to the contrary, he sees it as an evident warning sign that the doctrine of justification must not be relinquished, and that it is condemnable to base one’s salvation on Catholic practices such as sacrificial masses.

Based on theological differences, Protestants have an attitude towards spirits that differs largely from a Catholic attitude. The difference was indeed common knowledge in the early modern period. Zedler e.g. states that spectres, and among them poltergeists, have been supposed to be the immortal souls of the deceased. This belief, he says, was widely accepted among the Platonists and the pagans of the antiquity, the cabbalists, the rabbis, and it is still in full swing with the Turks.

³² Luther M., *Werke* III 3745.

To these examples of pagan and heathen aberration, Zedler adds the Catholics:

Dieser Meynung sind insonderheit die Röm. Cathol. zugethan, unter denen sich Delrio [...] und Casp. Schottus [...] viele Mühe selbige zu behaupten und auf festen Fuß zu setzen, gegeben haben. Denn sie nehmen daher Gelegenheit, ihren Glaubens-Genossen vorzustellen, wie sie sich gegen solche erscheinende Seelen zu verhalten [haben], damit sie aus dem Fege-Feuer befreyet würden [...].³³ – Especially the Roman Catholics are attached to this opinion, amongst whom Delrio [...] and Casp[ar] Schott have gone to great lengths to allege and to confirm it. For hence they seize the chance to introduce to their fellow believers the way in which they should behave towards such appearing souls in order to liberate them from Purgatory.

There is, however, not only a theological difference between the Protestants' and the Catholics' attitudes towards spirits. For either, spirits also served in different social contexts and textual genres. Catholics required spirits as a chance to liberate some poor souls from purgatory, and so they would have been less inclined to construe³⁴ them in texts; their approach would seem to be rather practical or pragmatic. Protestants, on the other hand, required spirits as signs warning against the ways of the devil; they would need repeated empirical evidence of demonic apparitions and would therefore be inclined to construe spirits in recurring exemplary narratives. Literature in this protestant context also serves to differentiate the empirical casuistry of spirits.

In order to exemplify these circumstances I will examine some texts by protestant authors from the 17th century,³⁵ texts construing the apparition of poltergeists. The primary instance to turn to is the genre of 'mirabilia', which was renewed by numerous works in the vein of literary 'wunderkammers'. They all insist that the tales they recount are based on historical truth. E.g., the 'Grösseste Denkwürdigkeiten der Welt'³⁶ by Eberhard Werner Happel are described on the title-page as a collection comprising 'Die Merkwürdigsten Geschichte [!] Der vorigen und jetzigen Zeiten/welche sich in der gantzen Welt durchgehends

³³ Zedler J.H., *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon* col. 1373.

³⁴ For the constructional nature of spirits Buse P. – Scott A. (eds.), *Ghosts. Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (Basingstoke: 1999).

³⁵ Also Treppmann A., *Besuche aus dem Jenseits. Geistererscheinungen auf dem deutschen Theater im Barock* (Konstanz: 1999).

³⁶ Happel E.W., *Grösseste Denkwürdigkeiten der Welt*, 5 vols. (Hamburg: 1683–1690). I quote from the edition by Hübner U. – Westphal J. (Berlin: 1990).

zugetragen und begeben haben'³⁷ – 'The most memorable tales of previous and present times which occurred and happened throughout the world'.

In the 'Denkwürdigkeiten' Happel, himself the son of a Lutheran pastor, also recounts various events of spectral apparitions. One of the poltergeist narratives, entitled 'Das seltsame Gespenst' ('The strange spectre') is preluded by a passage stressing once again the factuality of the material, here the factuality of spectres: 'So bleibt es demnach dabei, daß man wahrhaftige Gespenster in der Welt hat erlebt und noch erlebt' – 'Thus it remains true that veritable spectres have been experienced in the world'. The narrative is set in Athens at the times of Athenodorus, a philosopher belonging to the stoic school in ancient Greece. A haunted house is shunned by everybody, 'dann man höre oftmals ein Geschlepp von eisernen Ketten, alsdann erschien ein Gespenst in Gestalt eines alten Mannes, sehr ungeschaffen, mit einem langen Bart, abscheulichen Haaren und Banden an den Beinen, wodurch viele Leute in einen tödlichen Schrecken geraten sind'³⁸ – 'because a dragging of iron chains would be heard, then a spectre in the form of an old man appeared, quite unshapely, with a long beard, abominable hair, and shackles on the legs, whereby many people got a deathly shock'. Notwithstanding these daunting circumstances, Athenodorus rents the house and on his first night there occupies himself writing a treatise to get his mind off the spectre. Suddenly he hears a clanking of iron and eventually of chains. Athenodorus does not raise his eyes and carries on writing, even plugs his ears. But the clanking persists and grows louder, so that eventually he looks up and sees the spectre of the old man. The spectre waves to him, but the philosopher silently indicates that it will have to wait, and continues writing, whereupon the man rattles his chains at Athenodorus's head. His peace disturbed, the philosopher yields to the noise and is ushered into the courtyard, where the spectre points at a certain spot. Athenodorus marks the place, and on the next day has the authorities dig into the soil. The skeleton of a shackled man is unearthed and subsequently buried properly. From then on, the house was not haunted any more.

The spirit construed here is in full accordance with the Paracelsian concept of the *corpus spirituale*. The main manifestation of the spectre –

³⁷ Happel E.W., *Grösste Denkwürdigkeiten der Welt* 5, 1690.

³⁸ Happel E.W., *Grösste Denkwürdigkeiten der Welt* 262s.

a real poltergeist – is the clanking noise that terrifies people to death. Athenodorus, being a pagan but belonging to the stoic school, reacts with stoicism just as Luther would have – this is the focal point of the narrative. Keeping his cold blood, the philosopher can help the spectre find its peace. In order to so, it is necessary for the poltergeist to make itself visible, or else it would not have been able to indicate the place where the body lay buried improperly.

Another genre of texts to be examined here draws upon such ‘mirabilia’ but integrates the single narrative into a specific and sometimes fictional context. In his “Grosse Schau-Platz jämmerlicher Mord-Geschichte”, in a chapter entitled “Erscheinung der Geister” (Apparition of Spirits), Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, in full accordance with Luther, states that it is ‘ausser zweiffel/daß der böse Feind ein Ursacher und Stifter solcher solcher Abenteuer’³⁹ – ‘beyond a doubt that the evil adversary [is] an originator and founder of such adventures’. The devil is behind ‘such adventures’, i.e. the apparition of spirits. The text continues by classifying these apparitions in pagan antiquity. Firstly, there are the guardian spirits of the living, the ‘genii’. Secondly, there are the spirits of those who died peacefully, the ‘penates’. And thirdly, there are the spirits of the ‘übelverstorbenen’ (‘evilly deceased’) persons, i.e. the ‘Poltergeister’ or ‘lemures’.⁴⁰

Harsdörffer’s ‘Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele’ elaborate this casuistry by giving various examples of spectral apparitions. In a conversation dedicated to ‘Gespenster’ (‘spectres’) a narrative gives evidence of a poltergeist.⁴¹ In Stockholm, a young butcher falls in love with his maid-servant. In order to be able to marry the girl, he kills his wife, splitting her head with his cleaver, and has her interred rapidly. Subsequently, a poltergeist haunts the place and eventually drives the newly-wed couple from their house. An aristocratic and pious widow who some time later pays a visit to Stockholm is put up in the empty building and defies all warnings against staying in the haunted house, ‘mit festem Vertrauen/GOtt werde sie wol schützen/und schirmen’⁴² – ‘trusting firmly that God would well protect and patronise her’. At midnight ‘kommt das

³⁹ Harsdörffer G.P., *Der Grosse Schau-Platz jämmerlicher Mord-Geschichte* (Hamburg: 1656, repr. Hildesheim-New York: 1975) 403–408, here 407.

⁴⁰ Harsdörffer G.P., *Der Grosse Schau-Platz jämmerlicher Mord-Geschichte* 408.

⁴¹ Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele*, ed. I. Böttcher, Pt. VII (Nuremberg: 1647, repr. Tübingen: 1969) 362–372, here 363–366.

⁴² Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* 364.

Gespenst mit grossem Gepolter/in die Stuben: die Wittib befiht sich GOtt/und wendet das Angesicht gegen der Wand/bis das Gepolter geendet/und das Gespenst verschwunden⁴³ – ‘the spectre comes into the parlour with great rumbling: the widow commends herself to God and turns her face to the wall until the rumbling ended and the spectre vanished’. The widow seems to have read Luther closely, for she acts exactly in a way he reportedly had.

The turn, however, that the tale takes then, does indeed not quite follow Catholic patterns, but still deviates from Lutheran orthodoxy. On the following night, when the poltergeist appears again, the widow takes a heart, and confronts it. The spectre is now visible to her, showing the ‘imago’ of the murdered woman with her head split by the cleaver. It even speaks, stating, ‘Ich bin ein guter Geist’⁴⁴ – ‘I am a good spirit’, and explains the circumstances of her violent death to the widow, demanding that the infamous deed be avenged. The widow is able to uncover the murder and the butcher is taken to court and punished.

Clearly, the narrative in its second half is informed by protestant patterns insofar as the poltergeist does not reside in purgatory; it simply states that ‘sie könne nicht ruhen/bis ihr Mann/von der Obrigkeit/zu verdienter Strafe gezogen würde’⁴⁵ – ‘she could not rest until her husband be dealt his deserved punishment by the authorities’. But the apparition is neither demonic. The narrative here draws on Augustinian patterns by taking into consideration that an apparition may be caused by God: ‘Also kan auch [!] Gott das Verborgene offenbaren/und an das Licht bringen die Werke der Finsterniß’⁴⁶ – ‘Thus also [!] God can reveal what is hidden and bring to light the doings of darkness’.

At the end of Harsdörffer’s chapter on spectres in the ‘Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele’, the orthodox Lutheran perspective prevails sure enough.

‘Ein Edelmann eines bösen Lebens/wurde für Ostende erschossen/und von seinen Spießgesellen zu Grab getragen. Eine Zeit hernach wird der Verstorbne wiederüm gesehen/und von eben dem/der ihn hat helffen begraben/an dem Fürstlichen Landgräfischen Hof/in Bedienung des

⁴³ Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* 364.

⁴⁴ Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* 365.

⁴⁵ Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* 365.

⁴⁶ Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* 366. – The whole case is given in a slightly different version in Harsdörffer G.P., *Der Grosse Schau-Platz jämmerlicher Mord-Geschichte* 246–248.

Stallmeisteramts erkennet. So bald solches dem Fürsten angesagt worden/ist dieser Stallmeister verschwunden/und nicht mehr erschienen'⁴⁷ – 'An aristocrat who had led an evil life was shot to death outside Ostend and buried by his cronies. Some time afterwards the deceased is seen again, and is recognised at the princely court of the landgrave as serving as an equerry, by the very same man who had helped bury him. As soon as the prince had been notified about this, this equerry vanished and did not appear any more'.

The laconic commentary on this short narrative is also the conclusion to the chapter: 'Was hierdurch der böse Feind für ein Stükklein spielen wollen/ist GOTT bekannt'⁴⁸ – 'What trickery the evil adversary wanted to play through this, is known to GOD.' In the end, it is the devil that causes the apparition of spectres.

The third literary genre to be examined is the novel, which still draws upon the 'mirabilia' but has a full fictional setting so that the single narrative has less weight as referring to factual events. The narrative can rather claim moral relevance than historical interest; the supposition, however, still pertains that the narrative is not based upon invention.

Johann Beer's novel 'Der verliebte Europäer'⁴⁹ (1682) stages a christening on the occasion of which a banquet is held. One of the numerous village parsons assembled there recounts his tale of tribulation caused by a poltergeist:

'Ich werde alle Nächte von einem unruhigen Polter-Geiste so sehr getribuliret/daß ich mich oft nicht einmal mit Gottes Wort von selbigen loß machen kann. Oftt kommt das Gespenste zu mir vor das Bette/in Gestalt eines Ziegenbocks/und wil mich mit seinen Hörnern aus dem Bette stossen. Oftt erscheinet es mir in Gestalt eines alten Weibes/eines München/und dergleichen [...]'⁵⁰ – 'A restless poltergeist badgers me every night so much that I cannot even by God's word break away from it. Often the spectre comes to me in front of my bed in the form of a billy goat and wants to push me out of bed with its horns. Often it appears to me in the form of an old hag, of a monk, and the like [...]'.

It is interesting to notice the phrasing here. The parson calls the apparition a 'poltergeist' at first, but then does not mention any noises at all. Instead, he describes the spectre, which rather annoys than terrifies

⁴⁷ Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* 372.

⁴⁸ Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* 372.

⁴⁹ Beer J., 'Der verliebte Europäer', in Ingen F. van – Roloff H.-G. (eds.), *Johan Beer: Sämtliche Werke*, 10, (Berne et al.: 2002) 5–112.

⁵⁰ Beer J., 'Der verliebte Europäer' 79.

him, only in terms of visibility and tangibility. It seems as if the word 'poltergeist' would have become almost synonymous with 'spectre' in the 17th century. In the 'Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele' one person says, 'Es gehet auch ein grosser Betrug für/mit den falschen Gespensten/indem sich lose Leute in solche Poltergeister verstellen [...]'⁵¹ – 'Also there is great deceit with the false spectres, as loose people disguise themselves as such poltergeists [...]'.

If indeed 'poltergeist' and 'spectre' coincide, this is probably due to Lutheran theology. A 'false spectre' would be a demonic apparition, and so is the parson's poltergeist. It is so strong and obstinate that he cannot even by God's word free himself from it. The construction of his narrative does, however, not lead to a discussion of means by which the specific parson would be able to get rid of his nuisance. The narrative instead leads to a general debate of the theory of spectral apparitions, the cause of which is always identified as the devil. In the novel, this debate goes on for almost seven pages.

Insofar as the narrative is not construed as a 'historical' story with an unambiguous reference to reality, it does not call for a practical solution as to how to get rid of the parson's poltergeist. (Such a solution would be hard to find anyway, since not even God's word will help). The better option here seems to have the text stage an elaborate discussion among theologians, who in their conversation devise a copious casuistry of spectres.

For a Protestant like Beer, the apparition of spectres was indeed a disquieting fact, which had to be discussed over and over again. In his diary Beer says, 'Daß Gespenste seyn, ist kein Zweifel, aber was sie seyn, und wie sie seyn, auch warum sie [...] erscheinen, das übertrifft den Verstand'⁵² – 'That spectres do exist is beyond a doubt, but what they are, and how they are, also why they [...] appear, surpasses comprehension'. In his diary he also recounts numerous occasions of spectral apparitions, among which there is a poltergeist: 'Entsetzliche Geschichte von einem Gespenste, so sich unfern der Statt Weissenfelß im Dorffe zu Lösau 1699 sehen lassen'⁵³ – 'Horrible relation of a spectre which made itself seen not far from the town of Weißenfels in the village at Lösau'. Affirming the factuality of the narrative, Beer states the place

⁵¹ Harsdörffer G.P., *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* 370.

⁵² Beer J., *Sein Leben, von ihm selbst erzählt* (ed. A. Schmiededecke, Preface R. Alewyn) (Göttingen: 1965) 154.

⁵³ Beer J., *Sein Leben, von ihm selbst erzählt* 149–152.

and the time of the event, which he would have heard of himself, as he was a Weißenfels resident in 1699.

The tale goes as follows: A miller has a row with a tailor at a tavern about a girl. The tailor with a shovel batters the miller who subsequently expires in the general room because nobody would call a doctor or a parson. A couple of days after the murder, the landlady at night hears someone unlock her parlour door. She thinks it is her husband coming home and starts talking to him without getting an answer. Suddenly someone grabs her with a hand as cold as ice. Terrified, she pushes the bed's curtain aside and sees the murdered miller standing before her. When in the next minute her husband arrives, she is reluctant to admit having experienced a spectre. So she tells him that she has heard a noise in the yard. The landlord looks down and sees the miller standing there in the bright moonlight. He takes a heart and addresses the spectre, telling it that if it has been treated unfairly by the tailor, it should consider that the Lord Jesus was treated even more unjustly. Immediately the spectre goes down on all fours like a dog and crawls into the garden, sighing, and with such crackling as if wild bears were breaking through the fence. Later the landlord said that he then saw something which would never leave his heart nor his mouth. Nobody would ever know what that had been. The spectre, however, continues molesting the landlord and his wife acoustically, roaming along the walls in their parlour. When they affix a printed benediction at the outside of the parlour door, the poltergeist cannot enter the room any more but makes noises as if a hand was brushing over paper. The apparition only vanishes after the tailor's execution. The landlord dies of melancholy soon afterwards.

The way it is construed, the narrative does not speak of demonic doings but accepts as a simple fact the existence of spectres. It is not theologically charged either. As for the parson's poltergeist in the novel, there is no redemption through words, through the landlord's reference to the Lord Jesus for the poltergeist here. Only the accomplishment of justice brings about deliverance. As in the novel, Beer in the next entry into his diary adds a longish discussion on spectral apparitions.⁵⁴ Differing from the novel, however, this discussion is not dealing with theological matters at all. Instead, it focuses on the factuality of such events, which are to be regarded as real even if they may not be based upon

⁵⁴ Beer J., *Sein Leben, von ihm selbst erzählt* 152–154.

personal experience: ‘wann man vor 1000. Jahren denen Europäern von einer Neuen Welt gesagt hette, sie...sich sondern Zweiffel nicht allein bucklicht...sondern den Referenten vor einen...historicum gehalten haben’⁵⁵ – ‘if someone a thousand years ago had told the Europeans about a New World, they [would?] without a doubt have [laughed?] themselves crooked, but also have considered the relater a [false, lying?] historian’.

Beer at his historical stage is not yet open to a reflexion of spectres as being narrative constructions, but his reasoning in his diary lingers on the verge of a new development, i.e. the explanation of spiritual apparitions as phenomena of delusion and of symbolic formations designed to create illusions such as literary texts. It is still possible to draw a conclusion from the material presented here. The staging and construction of spectral apparitions depends on its denominational and social functions, and the textual genre. A spectre or spirit is not the same for either Catholics or Protestants; it is not the same for either theologians or laymen; it is not the same either in a novel or a diary. A poltergeist, being mute and unable to deliver a clear message, is the most disturbing and irritating of spectres. Its apparition will annoy, terrify, and even kill the person who experiences it; its narrative occurrence will trigger all the casuistry at hand in order to explain its existence. At the end of the 17th century, in Beer’s texts, poltergeists seem to be in a state of crisis. Their factuality needs to be emphasised more determinedly than ever before, so that the texts claim that poltergeists cannot be driven away, and scourge the incredulity of people. This may have been the beginning of the end of poltergeists as empirical phenomena; their terrifying afterlife as aesthetic phenomena, e.g. in films, however, was yet to come.

⁵⁵ Beer J., *Sein Leben, von ihm selbst erzählt* 154. – The omissions in the text are due to the illegibility of Beer’s manuscript.

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FIRE, SMOKE AND VAPOUR.
JAN BRUEGHEL'S 'POETIC HELLS':
'GHESPOOCK' IN EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN ART

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Karel van Mander, in the 'Life of Jeronimus Bos' in his *Schilder-Boeck* of 1604, speaks of the 'wondrous or strange fancies' (*wonderlijke oft seldsaem versieringhen*), which this artist 'had in his head and expressed with his brush' – the 'phantoms and monsters of hell (*ghespoock en ghedrochten der Hellen*) which are usually not so much kindly as ghastly to look upon'.¹ Taking one of Bosch's depictions of the *Descent of Christ into the Limbo of the Fathers* as an example, van Mander further notes that 'it's a wonder what can be seen there of odd spooks (*oubolligh ghespoock*); also, how subtle and natural (*aerdigh en natuerlijk*) he was with flames, fires, smoke and vapours'.² In the *Schilder-Boeck*, van Mander frequently uses the word 'aerdigh' to describe the aesthetically pleasing quality of small works or small details;³ here, 'aerdigh' refers to the natural and lively depiction of fires.

As it has been observed, van Mander's list of Bosch's painterly expressions echoes Erasmus's often-cited eulogy on Dürer in the *Dialogus de recta Latini Graecique sermonis pronuntiatione* (*Dialogue About the Correct Pronunciation of Latin and Greek*), published in Basel in 1528. According to

¹ Mander K. van, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the first edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603–1604)*, ed. H. Miedema, 6 vols. (Davaco: 1994–99) I 124f. (f. 216v): 'Wie sal verhalen al de wonderlijke oft seldsaem versieringhen/die Ieronimus Bos in't hooft heeft ghehadt/en met den Pinceel uytghedruckt/van ghespoock en ghedrochten der Hellen/dickwils niet alsoo vriendlijk als grouwlijk aen te sien.' Here and in the following, my translation is largely based on the one given in Miedema's edition of *The Lives*; I use, however, a more literal translation of van Mander's expressions.

² Mander K. van, *Lives* I 124f. (f. 216v): 'Noch is van hem op de Wael een Helle/daer de oude Vaders verlost worden [...] t'is wonder wat daer al te sien is van oubolligh ghespoock: oock hoe aerdigh en natuerlijk hy was/van vlammen/branden/roocken en smoocken.' The painting has not been identified. See Miedema's commentary on this passage in Mander K. van, *Lives* III 55–56 (f. 216v25).

³ Miedema H., *Fraey en aerdigh, schoon en moy in Karel van Mander's Schilder-Boeck* (Amsterdam: 1984) 21. For the use and meaning of the word 'aerdigh', see also Mander K. van, *Lives* II 233.

Erasmus, Dürer is superior to Apelles, since Dürer expressed ‘in black lines’ and without the aid of colours ‘that which cannot be depicted: fire, rays of light, thunder, sheet lightning, lightning, or, as they say, the “clouds on the wall”’.⁴ In the *Adagia*, published in Basel in 1520, Erasmus had given the meaning of the phrase ‘clouds on the wall’ as ‘something frivolous or vane’. Referencing the fourth-century Latin poet and rhetorician Ausonius, Erasmus further asserts in the *Adagia* that ‘a cloud is too insubstantial (*inanius*) to be expressed by colours’.⁵ *Inanis*, which literally means ‘containing nothing’ or ‘empty’, was commonly used in the sense of ‘fraudulent’ and ‘false’; *inanis* could further denote the ‘insubstantiality’ of the other world or the ‘incorporeality’ of the shades.⁶ Thus, while both Erasmus and van Mander include subtle, insubstantial things in their catalogues of artistic effects accomplished by Dürer and Bosch, respectively, the differences between the two lists are nonetheless striking. Van Mander explicitly praises Bosch for his exquisite painterly technique;⁷ no mention is further made by van Mander that the objects of Bosch’s imagination are at the boundary of what can be portrayed; and, perhaps most importantly, ‘ghespooock’ and ‘ghedrochten der Hellen’ are added to the fires and flames, which in van Mander’s text exist in three different places and forms: in hell; in Bosch’s head; and in Bosch’s works of art. In this essay I shall further explore the aesthetic and cultural values associated with ‘ghespooock’ as well as the place of images of fires, ghosts and spectres in the visual arts around 1600.

⁴ ‘Durerus quanquam et alias admirandus, in monochromatis, hoc est, nigris lineis, quid non exprimit? umbras, lumen, splendorem, eminentias, depressiones [...] Quin ille pingit et quae pingi non possunt, ignem, radios, tonitura, fulgetra, fulgura, vel nebulas, ut aiunt, in pariete [...]’ I cite from Panofsky E., “‘Nebulae in Pariete’; Notes on Erasmus’ Eulogy on Dürer”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14 (1951) 34–41, here 36. Erasmus’s own text is based upon Pliny’s praise of Apelles (*Naturalis historia* XXXV 96). For the catalogues by Pliny and Erasmus and the significance of Erasmus’s text for sixteenth-century depictions of fires, see Stoichita V.I., “‘Lochi di foco’. La città ardente nella pittura del Cinquecento”, in Pfisterer U. – Seidel M. (eds.), *Visuelle Topoi: Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance* (Munich-Berlin: 2003).

⁵ Erasmus, *Adagia* (Basel: 1520), 788 (4th chiliar, 5th centuria, no. XXIX). I cite from Panofsky, “‘Nebulae’” 39: “[...] significant, frivolum, ac vanum. Nam nebula res est inanius quam ut coloribus exprimi queat.”

⁶ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P.G.W. Glare (Oxford: 2003) 860.

⁷ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 124f.

Ghespooch In and Around Bosch's Head

Van Mander concludes the short vita of Bosch with his own slightly augmented Dutch translation of the Latin verses by the Liège humanist Domenicus Lampsonius that accompanied Bosch's engraved portrait in the series *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae inferioris effigies* (*Portraits of Some of the Famous Painters of Lower Germany*). Collected by Lampsonius, the 23 'portraits' were published by Hieronymus Cock in Antwerp in 1572:

Hieronymus Bosch, what means your frightened face
And pale appearance? It seems as though you just
Saw all infernal spectres fly close around your ears.
I think that all the deepest rings of miserly Pluto
Were revealed, and the wide habitations of Hell
Opened to you – because you are so art-ful
In painting with your right hand depictions
Of all that the deepest bowels of Hell contain.⁸

Van Mander's image of the 'wondrous fancies' (*wonderlijke oft seldsaem versieringhen*) in Bosch's head is here supplemented, in a witty and visually evocative manner, by the motif of the 'infernal spectres' (*helsch ghespooch*) flying at close distance around Bosch's ears. In fact, 'versieringe' can mean both ornamental detail and mental image or conception. 'Versieren' was often used synonymously with 'dichten', thus meaning 'to devise', 'imagine', 'dream up'.⁹ The 'infernal spectres' whizzing past Bosch's ears recall contemporary proverbs, moral tales and visual satires about monstrous insects and other devilish creatures that persecute the wicked, ridiculous, or mad.¹⁰ But the 'wondrous fancies' and 'infernal spectres' also expand on art theoretical notions that were, by the

⁸ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 124–27 (f. 216v–217r): 'Ieroon Bos, wat beduydt u soo verschrickt ghesicht, | En aenschijn alsoo bleeck, het schijnt oft even dicht | Ghy al het helsch ghespooch saeght vliegghen om u ooren. | Ick acht dat al ontdaen u zijn de diepste chooren | Gheweest van Pluto ghier, en d'helsche wonsten wijt | V open zijn ghedaen, dat ghy soo constigh zijt, | Om met u rechter handt gheschildert uyt te stellen, | Al wat in hem begrijpt den dipsten schoot der Hellen.' See Koldewij J. – Vandenbroeck P. – Vermet B., *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* (Rotterdam: 2001) 10f.

⁹ Verwijs E. – Verdaem J., *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek* VIII ('s-Gravenhage: 1916) cols. 2431–32.

¹⁰ Vandenbroeck P., "Zur Herkunft und Verwurzelung der 'Grillen'. Vom Volksmythos zum kunst- und literaturtheoretischen Begriff, 15.–17. Jahrhundert", *De zeventiende eeuw* 3 (1987) 53–84; Bredekamp H., "Grillenfänge von Michelangelo bis Goethe", *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 22 (1989) 169–180.

beginning of the seventeenth century, commonplace in the humanist literature on Bosch and his works. Already the Spanish art critic and collector of Flemish paintings, Don Felipe de Guevara, in his manuscript *Comentarios de la Pintura* (*Commentaries on Painting*) of about 1560, views Bosch's figural inventions in the tradition of the 'comical figures' and 'grylli' (crickets), which the Greek painter Antiphilus had elevated to a separate pictorial genre.¹¹

Translated by van Mander, Lampsonius's verses describe what can be called an effect of interaction or contagion.¹² The interior experience of the places of hell affects the expression on Bosch's face; he is terrified (*verschrickt, attonitus*) and turns pale from the blood's withdrawal (*aenschijn alsoo bleeck, pallor in ore*). 'Ghastly' (*grouwlijck*) to look at, Bosch's paintings in their turn 'infect' the beholders with corresponding emotions. Moreover, the monsters of hell find their doubles in the 'infernal spectres' (*helsch ghespoock*), fancies, or dreams (*versieringhen*) in or around Bosch's head. Finally, it was Bosch's artfulness (*const*) that granted him access to the underworld and the habitations of devils and ghosts.¹³

The concept of a mutual attraction between an artist's temperament and a specific artistic genre lies at the foundation of van Mander's biographical writing. In the dedication of the *Netherlandish Lives*, van Mander expands on Virgil's dictum 'that everyone is attracted to what pleases him' (*Dat yeder is tot zijn vrellust ghetrocken*):

For one finds that each person's desire and inclination pleasantly attracts and draws him towards something besides the necessities of life, that is towards something which agrees with the form and being of his spirit and nature.¹⁴

¹¹ Felipe de Guevara, *Comentarios de la Pintura*, c. 1560. Sánchez Cantón FJ., *Fuentes Literarias para la Historia del Arte Español I* (Madrid: 1923) 159. See Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia* XXXV 144.

¹² For the role of contagion and interaction, in particular the 'contagion of laughter', in early modern literature, see Betrand D., "Contagious Laughter and the Burlesque: From the Literal to the Metaphorical", in *Imagining Contagion in Early Modern Europe*, ed. C.L. Carlin (Houndmills: 2005) 177–94.

¹³ For the interrelationship between artistic and demonological theories of imagination, see Swan C., *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629)* (Cambridge: 2005) 123–56, and *passim*.

¹⁴ Mander K. van, *Lives I* 46f. (f. 197r7, 10–13): 'Want men bevindt, dat yeder Menschen lust en genegentheyt, beneffens behoeffijcke dinghen, ergen toe soetlijck aenghelockt en ghetrocken wort, te weten, tot sulcx, als zijnen geest en aert van gedaent en wesen zijn.' The Virgil quote, 'Trahit sua quemque voluptas', is from *Eclogues* 2, v. 65.

Desire is here explained as a natural inclination toward something that corresponds 'in form and essence' with one's own spirit (*gheest*) and nature (*aerdt*). While Virgil's dictum is referred here by van Mander to honour his dedicatees' love for the visual arts – van Mander dedicated this part of the *Schilder-Boeck* to the goldsmith Jan Mathijsz. Ban and the wine merchant Cornelis Vlasman –, the same mechanism of attraction is proposed throughout the *Lives* to explain artists' habits. In early modern art theory, preferences for specific artistic styles, genres, subjects, or working techniques were often thought to reveal artists' temperaments as well as these artists' national and regional origins. In Italian art criticism, images of fire, smoke and spectres were soon to be identified with the 'maniera Fiamminga', that is to say, with a 'foreign' manner distinct from the dominant regional styles of Italian art. Vasari, in his *Lives* of 1568, lists 'fantasticherie, bizzarrie, sogni, imaginations' with 'fuochi, notti, splendori, diavoli' as subjects in which Flemish artists excelled:

Franz Mostaert, who was passing skilful in painting landscapes in oils, fantasies, bizarre inventions, dreams, and suchlike imaginings. Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Brueghel of Breda were imitators of that Mostaert, and Lancelot Blondeel has been excellent in painting fires, nights, splendours, devils, and other things of that kind.¹⁵

The variety of airy, fiery, or ethereal 'subtle' substances is here expanded through other evanescent qualities, objects, and states such as 'fantasies', 'imaginings' and 'dreams'. In early modern usage, 'spook' could equally refer to a ghost, a phantom, spectre, dream, fantasy, or delusion.¹⁶ Similarly, 'ghedroch' or 'ghedrocht' meant a false apparition,

¹⁵ Vasari G., *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*, ed. Pergola P. della – Grassi L. – Previtali G., 9 vols. (Novara: 1967) VII 467f.: '[...] Francesco Mostaret, che valse assai in fare paesi a olio, fantasticherie, bizzarrie, sogni et imaginations. Girolamo Hertoglien Bos e Pietro Bruveghel di Breda furono imitatori di costui, e Lancelotto è stato eccellente in far fuochi, notti, splendori, diavoli e cose somiglianti.' For the English translation see Vasari G., *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. G. du C. de Vere, 2 vols. (New York: 1996) II 863. See also Guicciardini L., *Descriptione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* [...] (Antwerp: 1567) 98G: 'Lancilotto mirabile nel far' apparire un 'fuoco vivo, & naturale, come l'incendio di Troia, & simile cose [...]'. I cite from Miedema, in Mander K. van, *Lives* II 246.

¹⁶ Grimm J. – Grimm W., *Deutsches Wörterbuch* IV (Leipzig: 1897) cols. 417f.; 'Gespuke'; Vervijns E. – Verdaem J., *Middelnederlandsch woordenboek* II (s-Gravenhage: 1912) cols. 1775–77; Kilianus C., *Etymologicum teutonicae linguae, sive, Dictionarium teutonico-latinum* (3rd, increased and revised ed. Antwerp: ex officina Plantiniana, apud Ioannem Moretum, 1599) 515; 'spoocke/spoocksel' is translated as 'spectrum, larva, phantasma'.

vision, spook, or phantom¹⁷ and was often used synonymously with 'tovernie', sorcery.¹⁸ According to contemporary experts in demonology, demons enjoyed mingling with the gaseous and vaporous substances of the air in order to make themselves visible to human eyes.¹⁹

'Poetic Hells' by Jan Brueghel the Elder

At the centre of my subsequent discussion are the nocturnal fires and hellish landscapes produced by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1624) from about 1594 to about 1608, within a period of roughly 15 years.²⁰ Jan Brueghel the Elder is generally seen as the 'last heir' of a generation of Flemish painters who worked in the manner of Bosch.²¹ His association with Bosch's imagery followed a family tradition: Jan was the second son of Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525/30–1569) who, in his turn, was already during his lifetime called a 'great imitator of the science and fantasies of Hieronymus Bosch', and, consequently, a 'second Bosch'.²²

'Invented' in the mid 1590s in Italy, the 'branden', 'fuochi', or 'incendi' by Jan Brueghel the Elder exhibit Bosch's monsters and spectres as part of new pictorial inventions that met the taste for the strange and wondrous shared by the aristocratic and clerical elites of the day. So unique and distinctive were these hellish landscapes that, by the end of the seventeenth century, they were excluded from Jan's work and ascribed to his elder brother, Pieter Brueghel the Younger

¹⁷ Verwijs E. – Verdaem J., *Woordenboek* II col. 470f.: Kilianus C., *Etymologicum* 128, gives 'ghedrogh/ghedroght' as Latin 'ludificatio, impostura, praestigiae, spectrum, phantasma. & Animalcula monstrosa'.

¹⁸ Verwijs E. – Verdaem J., *Woordenboek* VIII col. 620.

¹⁹ Del Rio M., *Investigations into Magic*, ed. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester-New York: 2000) 112. On this passage in Martin del Rio's treatise, see the contribution by Sven Dupré in this volume.

²⁰ The most complete discussion of the hellish landscapes by Jan Brueghel the Elder is by Ertz K., *Jan Brueghel der Ältere (1568–1625). Die Gemälde mit kritischem Oeuvrekatalog* (Cologne: 1979) 116–136 (on hellish landscapes); 378–84 (on allegories of fire). See also Ertz K. – Nitze-Ertz C. (eds.), *Pieter Breughel der Jüngere, Jan Brueghel der Ältere: Flämische Malerei um 1600, Tradition und Fortschritt*, exh. cat., Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen and Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (Lingen: 1997) 171–82, 503–506.

²¹ For Jan Brueghel the Elder as the 'last heir' of Bosch's pictorial creations see Silver L., *Hieronymus Bosch* (New York-London: 2006) 391–97.

²² See Guicciardini L., *Descrittione* 100: 'Pietro Brueghel di Breda grande imitatore della scienza, & fantasie di Girolamo Bosco, onde n'ha anche acquistato il soprannome di secondo Girolamo Bosco.'

(1564/65–1637/38), who was then dubbed 'Hell Brueghel' ('helse Brueghel'), while Jan became to be known as 'Velvet Brueghel' ('fluwelen Brueghel').²³ There is, however, no doubt that the hells were invented by Jan; and that the invention was most likely motivated by some of Jan's early patrons in Rome. The first record of Jan Brueghel's stay in Rome dates from 1593, when the artist, then in his twenties, scribbled his name as well as the year on the wall of the St. Domitilla catacomb, which had been discovered by the young antiquarian and archaeologist Antonio Bosio (1575–1629) that very same year.²⁴ The excitement these archaeological findings caused among humanist and artistic circles sparked a general interest in the subterranean world. By 1593, Brueghel had already met Cardinal Federico Borromeo (1564–1631) who would become his lifelong patron and friend; in 1595, when Borromeo was appointed Archbishop of Milan, Brueghel followed his extended *famiglia* to Milan.²⁵ The protectors of Jan Brueghel the Elder also included the Cardinals Benedetto Giustiniani (1554–1621),²⁶ Francesco Maria del Monte (1549–1629),²⁷ and, most probably, Ascanio Colonna (1560–1608), the owner of one of the richest collections of books and manuscripts in Rome.²⁸ Federico Borromeo, Jan Brueghel's senior of four years, was the youngest among them.

But why this renewed interest in the representation of fires and spectres at the end of the sixteenth century, in a period characterised

²³ Duverger E., *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen uit de zeventiende eeuw XIII* (Brussels: 2004) 64–65, and *passim*.

²⁴ Bosio, however, believed it was the catacomb of S. Callisto. Hoofewerff G.J., "De romeinse catacomben", *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, fasc. 4 (1961) 193–230, here 224.

²⁵ Bedoni S., *Jan Brueghel in Italia e il Collezionismo del Seicento* (Florence-Milan: 1983) 42, 48. For Borromeo's biography, see Prodi P., "Federico Borromeo", *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 13 (1971) 33–42. On Federico Borromeo's art patronage, see Jones P.M., *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan* (Cambridge: 1995).

²⁶ For Benedetto Giustiniani, see Feci S. – Bortolotti L., "Giustiniano, Benedetto", *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 57 (2001) 315–25.

²⁷ For Jan Brueghel's clerical patrons, see Jones P., "Italian Devotional Paintings and Flemish Landscapes in the Quadrerie of Cardinals Giustiniani, Borromeo, and Del Monte", *Storia dell'arte* 107 (2004) 81–104. On Cardinal Del Monte's art patronage, see Wazbinski Z., *Il Cardinale Francesco Maria del Monte, 1549–1626*, 2 vols. (Florence: 1994).

²⁸ For Ascanio Colonna, see Petrucci F., "Colonna, Ascanio", *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 27 (1960) 275–78. For his possible relationship with Jan Brueghel the Elder, see Ertz K., "Jan Brueghel l'Aîné", in *Bruegel. Une dynastie de peintres*, exh. cat., Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Art (Brussels: 1980) 166.

by artistic and religious reform? By the mid-sixteenth century, nocturnal landscapes of hell featuring fires and lightning were almost mass-produced and often signed with Bosch's name, perhaps both as homage to the original inventor as well as with the aim of enhancing the aesthetic and monetary value of these artistic counterfeits.²⁹ The art lover and connoisseur de Guevara, however, dismissed, with one exception, the imitators of 'this kind of painting by Hieronymus Bosch' who, motivated by greed, 'fraudulently' signed with his name. According to de Guevara, such imitations 'are in reality the work of smoke and the short-sighted fools who smoked them in fireplaces in order to lend them credibility and an aged look'.³⁰ The harsh judgement passed by de Guevara on these pictures reveals an increasing awareness about artistic frauds.³¹ But de Guevara's description also points to the stylistic and iconographic features these compositions shared: these were paintings that needed to be viewed at close range; and, among other subjects, they also depicted fire and smoke.

From the mass-produced and often anonymous Boschian inventions by earlier Flemish masters, Jan Brueghel's hellish landscapes were distinguished in three ways. (1) Rather than painting his fiery scenes on panel or canvas, Jan Brueghel the Elder adopted the practice of almost every Netherlandish artist working in Italy and used small-format copper plates. Applied on a polished metallic surface, colours appear with a certain lustre or glow; material and technique are thus well suited for the representation of fire. (2) Characterised by a rich and diverse brushwork and a meticulous attention to detail,³² Jan Brueghel's fiery

²⁹ Among the major contributions are: Silver, *Bosch* 316–98; Unverfehrt G., *Hieronymus Bosch. Die Rezeption seiner Kunst im frühen 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1980); Gibson W.S., "Bosch's Dreams: A Response to the Art of Bosch in the Sixteenth Century", *Art Bulletin* 74 (1992) 205–218; Aikema B., "Hieronymus Bosch and Italy", in *Hieronymus Bosch: New Insights Into His Life and Works*, exh. cat., Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, ed. J. Koldeweij – B. Vermet – B. van Kooj (Ghent: 2001) 25–31.

³⁰ Guevara F. de, *Comentarios* I 159: 'Ansi vienen a ser infinitas las pinturas de este género, selladas con el nombre de Hyerónimo Bosco, falsamente inscripto; en las quales a él nunca le pasó por el pensamieniento poner las manos, sino el humo y cortos ingenios, ahumándolas a las chimeneas para dalles autoridad y anitgüedad.' According to de Guevara, Bosch's art consists of much more than 'monsters and various imaginary subjects' (*monstruos y desvariadas imaginaciones*). I cite from Stechow W., *Northern Renaissance Art 1400–1600: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs: 1966) 19.

³¹ Nagel A., "The Copy and its Evil Twin: Thirteen Notes on Forgery", *Cabinet Magazine* 14 (2004) 102–105.

³² On Jan Brueghel's painting method when using copper: Isabel Horovitz, "The Materials and Techniques of European Paintings on Copper Supports", *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper 1575–1775*, exh. cat., Phoenix Art

landscapes were, in contemporary sources, primarily described as virtuoso exercises, particularly in the imitation of natural colour and the rendering of light and various forms of reflection – topics concerning painterly and representational techniques discussed both in Italy and the north. (3) While Bosch's fires are connected with the religious imagery of purgatory and hell, Jan Brueghel the Elder expanded the meaning and imagery of fire to include mythological, historical and allegorical themes. Next to representations of religious themes – such as *The Descent of Christ into Limbo* [Fig. 1] and *The Temptations of St. Anthony*³³ – Jan Brueghel depicted the most famous descents into the underworld undertaken by Orpheus [Fig. 2], Juno [Fig. 3] and Aeneas [Figs. 4, 5]. He made further pictures of burning cities showing spectacles of fires but no demons, devils or ghosts.³⁴ In about 1608, Jan Brueghel the Elder developed a series of allegories depicting the destructive power of fire as well as the benefits derived from fire and craft, some of which are painted on panel [Fig. 6].

My focus here is on Brueghel's depictions of descents into hell. While the theme of *Christ's Descent into the Limbo of the Fathers* has a long visual tradition dating back to seventh-century art, and is, in sixteenth-century northern art, closely related to a Boschian imagery of monsters and ghosts as well as to Pieter Bruegel's art [Fig. 7],³⁵ pagan descents into the underworld were, up to Jan Brueghel the Elder, not a common subject for cabinet paintings. These visits to the underworld figured, of course, in illustrations of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* had an enormous impact on sixteenth-century

Museum (New York: 1999) 63–92, here 81f. Generally on Jan Brueghel the Elder's pictorial technique: Doherty T. – Leonard M. – Wadum J., "Brueghel and Rubens at Work: Technique and the Practice of Collaboration", in Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van (eds.), *Rubens & Brueghel: A Working Friendship*, exh. cat., The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (Los Angeles: 2006) 215–51. On the choice of copper as painting support by Netherlandish artists in Rome: Cappelletti F., "Il fascino del Nord: paesaggio, mito e supporto lucente", in *Il Genio di Roma 1592–1623*, exh. cat., ed. B.L. Brown, London, Royal Academy of Arts; Rome, Palazzo Venezia (Rome: 2001) 174–205.

³³ For various versions of the *Temptations of St. Anthony* by Jan Brueghel the Elder, see Ertz K., *Jan Brueghel der Ältere* 131–35; Ertz K. – Nitze-Ertz C., *Brueghel – Brueghel* 171–73, cat. 39 (Ertz K.); 506, cat. 191 (Wied A.); Silver L., *Bosch* 394.

³⁴ For Jan Brueghel's depictions of the burning Troy and the burning Sodom or Pentapolis, see Ertz K., *Jan Brueghel der Ältere* 130f.

³⁵ Orenstein, N.M., *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (New York: 2001) 210–12, cat. 87–88. For the iconography of the theme, see Lucchesi Palli, "Höllenfahrt Christi", *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* II (1970) cols. 322–331.



Fig. 1. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Hans Rottenhammer, *The Descent into Limbo*, 1597, oil on copper, 26.2 × 35.4 cm. The Hague, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, inv. 285. Image: © Mauritshuis, The Hague.



Fig. 2. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Orpheus Singing before Pluto and Proserpina*, 1594, oil on copper, 27 × 36 cm. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, inv. 1298. Image: © Galleria Palatina, Florence.



Fig. 3. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Juno in the Underworld*, 159(6?), oil on copper, 25.5 × 35.5 cm. Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie, inv. 877. Image: © Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.



Fig. 4. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Aeneas with the Cumaean Sibyl in the Underworld*, 1600, oil on copper, 22.5 × 35.5 cm. Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum, inv. 553 (645). Image: © Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest.



Fig. 5. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Aeneas with the Cumaean Sibyl in the Underworld*, shortly after 1600, oil on copper, 36 × 52 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. 817 (645). Image: © Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

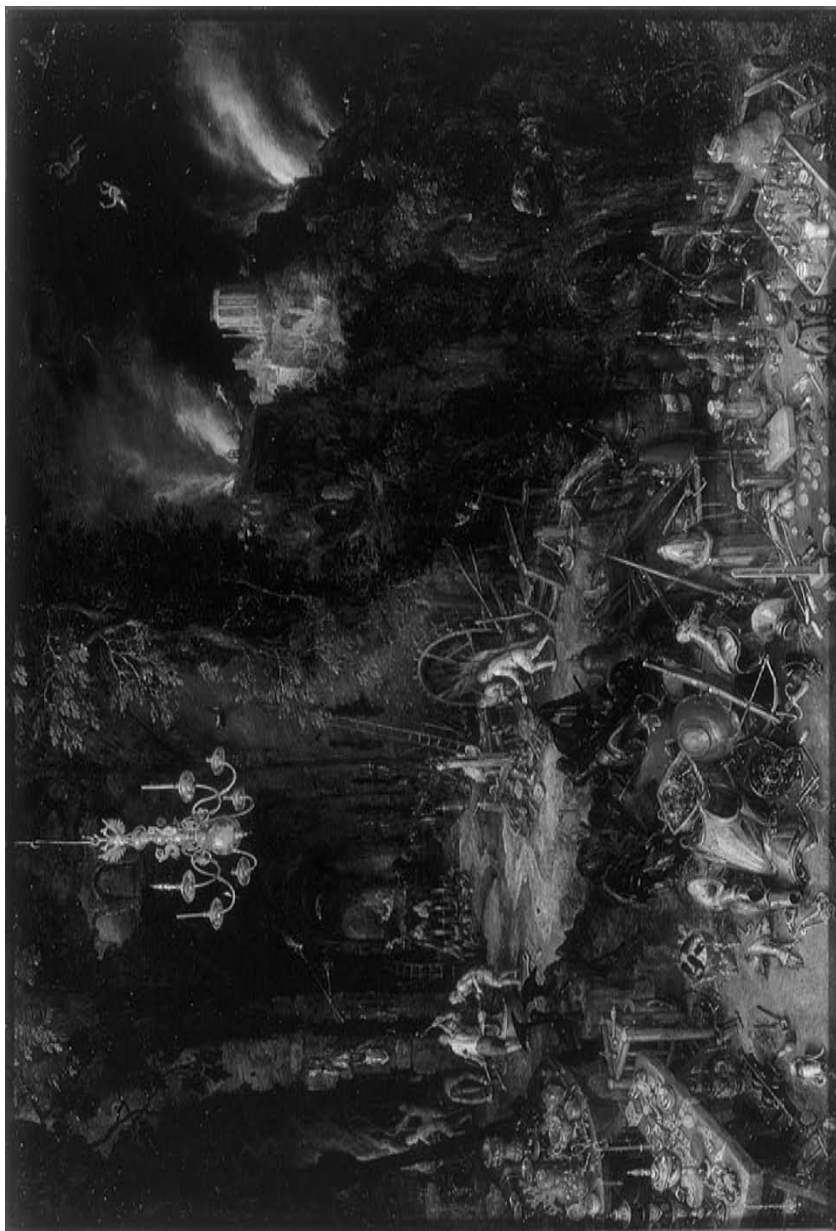


Fig. 6. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Allegory of Fire*, 1608, oil on panel, 46 × 66 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, inv. 68. Image: © Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.



Fig. 7. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Descent of Christ into Limbo*, 1561, pen and brown ink, contours intended for transfer, 22.3 × 29.4 cm. Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, inv. 7873. Image: © Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna.

visual and literary culture;³⁶ Karel van Mander himself included in his *Schilder-Boeck* a commentary on Ovid, which he recommended as 'very useful for painters, poets and lovers of art, as well as for teaching everyone'.³⁷ Virgil's *Aeneid* enjoyed continuous popularity throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; later in the sixteenth century, in a climate of religious reform, book six (which includes Aeneas's visit to the underworld) was occasionally cited in order to confirm Catholic or Protestant views of the geography of hell.³⁸ Sir John Harrington,

³⁶ Barolsky P., "As in Ovid, So in Renaissance Art", *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998) 451–74.

³⁷ Mander C. van, *Wilegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis. Alles streckende tot voordering des vromen en eerlycken borgherlycken wandels. Seer dienstich den Schilders, Dichters, en Constbeminers, oock yeghelyck tot leering by een gebracht en gheraemt* [Harlem: 1604] (New York: 1980).

³⁸ Kallendorf C., "From Virgil to Vida: The *Poeta Theologus* in Italian Renaissance Commentary", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995) 41–62.

poet at the court of Elizabeth I, in his 1604 commentary on the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, states:

Though this part of the booke for the lytterall & historycall sence ys meerly and apparawntly fabulous, yet the morall thearof contayns so many excellent points of Christianitye, as I thinke yt very fit to be noted though I must doe the same with more brevyty then so highe a matter requyreth to be handled.³⁹

In all of Jan Brueghel's compositions the underworld is crafted in a similar fashion: a hero or a heroine – Orpheus, Juno, Christ and Aeneas – visits, breaks into or rushes through an entirely artificial and foreign world [Figs. 1–5]. In each case the view is from a distant and high perspective into a rocky landscape with caves, abysses, tunnels and underground streams. Burning cities, fortresses and ruins are visible against a far horizon; rising flames and smoke colour the sky. Giant wheels indicate a world of eternal torment. In the foreground a plateau cut by deep canyons or a fragile bridge set on wooden posts provides a brightly illuminated stage. Upon this stage the main actors make their appearance, separated from but surrounded by a multitude of shades, demons and ghosts showing an extraordinary variety of human and hybrid forms. Next to Boschian monsters, figural inventions by Michelangelo and Tintoretto are also cited. Associated by Vasari and others with the 'gran maniera' of Italian art, the heroic figures are here adjusted to suit Jan Brueghel's crowded compositions of diminutive size. Brueghel's paintings on copper are further made distinctive through the use of various painterly techniques; while valued for the fine and accurate brushwork they also include passages that are more loosely worked.⁴⁰

Dated 1594, *Orpheus Singing before Pluto and Proserpina* depicts Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X 40–46, and is generally seen as the first hellish land-

³⁹ *The Sixth Book of Virgil's Aeneid. Tranlated and commented on by Sir John Harington (1604)*, ed. S. Cauchi (Oxford: 1991) 71.

⁴⁰ For the two manners of painting, 'rouwicheyt' and 'netticheyt', see Mander K. van, *Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, ed. H. Miedema, 2 vols. (Utrecht: 1973) I 258–261. See the commentary by Miedema in Mander K. van, *Grondt* II 599–600. On the central importance of 'netticheyt' (*diligence*), see Melion W.S., *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander's Schilder-Boeck* (Chicago-London: 1991) 60–63; Cutler L.C., "Virtue and Diligence: Jan Brueghel I and Federico Borromeo", *Virtus: virtuositeit en kunstliefhebbers in de Nederlanden, 1500–1700, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 54 (2003) 203–27. On the use of the 'gran maniera' in miniature painting, see Norgate E., *Miniatura or the Art of Limning*, ed. J.M. Muller – J. Murrell (New Haven-London: 1997) 74, 146f.

scape created by Jan Brueghel the Elder [Fig. 2].⁴¹ Orpheus has left the realms of the upper world and, after having wandered 'through the insubstantial throngs and the ghosts' (*leves populos simulacraque*), arrives before the king and the queen of 'unlovely realms' (*inamoenaque regna*) (X 11–15).⁴² Singing while striking the chords of his lyre, he moves the shades (*umbra*) and 'bloodless spirits' (*exsanguis animae*) to tears. Even the furies 'wet their cheek with tears', and both Pluto and Proserpina feel pity and compassion in their hearts. Yet the cessation of movement caused by Orpheus's song is translated in Brueghel's painting as a visual noisiness that both attracts and challenges the attention of the viewer. Sisyphus, however, momentarily uses his rock as seat to enjoy the music, rather than pushing it up the mountain. Standing in front of the enthroned rulers, Orpheus turns his head toward the beholder, alerting the audience to the effect of his art on the inhabitants of the other world whose wondrous shapes are the actual theme of Brueghel's painting. Delicately sketched over the dark *imprimatura*, a small lapdog, a beast resembling a dragon, and a red-eyed diabolical creature regurgitating reptiles bare their teeth at the spectator.

Another painting on copper, created about two years later, shows Juno in her carriage descending into Hades in order to ask the furies to drive Athamas mad [Fig. 3] (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV 451–560).⁴³ Although present in all of Brueghel's depictions of mythological descents, here, the furies – the infernal avenging spirits – play an especially prominent role. It has been noted that the group of women thrown by devils into a fiery furnace was copied from Tintoretto's large canvas painting of the *Murder of the Innocent Children* in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice. The corpses heaped up in the left foreground recall some of the figural motifs in the *Battle of the Amazons*, a work Jan Brueghel the Elder executed in collaboration with Rubens at about the same time.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ertz K., *Jan Brueghel der Ältere* 122, 557–8, cat. 5; Woollett A.T., "Two Celebrated Painters: The Collaborative Ventures of Rubens and Brueghel, ca. 1598–1625", in Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 7; Ertz K., "Some Thoughts on the Paintings of Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625)", in *Jan Brueghel the Elder: A Loan Exhibition of Paintings*, exh. cat., London, Brod Gallery (London: 1979), 14f.; Zoege von Manteuffel K., "Bilder flämischer Meister in der Galerie der Uffizien zu Florenz", *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 14 (1921).

⁴² I am citing from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. F.J. Miller, 2 vols. (London: 1925) II 65–71.

⁴³ Ertz K., *Jan Brueghel der Ältere* 122, 129–30, 562–63, cat. 32; Ertz K. – Nitze-Ertz C., *Brueghel – Brueghel* 174–77, cat. 40 (Neidhardt U.).

⁴⁴ Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 44–51, cat. 1.

There are further comical figures and visual jokes reoccurring in other depictions of descents into hell: an athletic winged devil seen from the back hissing and spewing at the heroine or the hero; variations of froglike, bat-like, or birdlike creatures spreading their arms and legs; a devil crouching next to a fire; a giant head positioned on a crab-like body. Particularly alluring are those shapes, shades and spectres in the foreground of the compositions, often hardly perceptible against the dark brownish tones in the foreground with which they merge.

The three versions of *Aeneas with the Cumaean Sibyl in the Underworld* show how Brueghel varied his inventions to compose a fiery and dark place swarming with monsters [Figs. 4, 5].⁴⁵ The most innovative painting is in Vienna where Aeneas, ready to draw his sword against some of the ghosts, is mocked and ridiculed by a large bearded face attached to a kind of tree whose branches partially morph into human hands. Executed in collaboration with the German artist Hans Rottenhammer (1564–1625), the Mauritshuis *Descent into Limbo* of about 1597 features many of the same monsters in a hell characterised by underground caves, cliffs and a dark river. Here, Brueghel's inventions are made more precious through the contribution by Rottenhammer who painted the main figures [Fig. 1].⁴⁶

The Stygian Regions and the Realm of Vulcan

It was thus in Italy that Jan Brueghel the Elder 're-invented' a manner intimately linked with the art of Hieronymus Bosch as well as his own father. How were such fires and hellish inventions valued and described in the literature on the visual arts around 1600? In accordance with previous authors, van Mander, in his *Schilder-Boeck*, considers Pieter Bruegel the Elder as the most accomplished imitator and successor of Bosch: Pieter Bruegel 'had practiced a lot after the works of Hieronymus Bosch and he also made many spectres and burlesques (*spoockerijen/en*

⁴⁵ Ertz K., *Jan Brueghel der Ältere* 116, 130, 568, cat. 65 (Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum, inv. 551 (640); 568, cat. 66 (Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum, inv. 553 (645); 130, 568, cat. 67 (Vienna); Ertz K. – Nitze-Ertz C., *Brueghel – Brueghel* 177–180, cat. 41 (Budapest, inv. 551 (640, Ertz K.); 503, cat. 190 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wied A.); Silver L., *Bosch* 294–96.

⁴⁶ Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 132–35, cat. 15 (Suchtelen A. van); *Copper as Canvas* 155–58 (Komanecky M.K.); Broos B., *Intimacies & Intrigues, History Painting in the Mauritshuis* (The Hague: 1993) 79–87.

drollen) in his manner so that he was called by many Pier den Drol'.⁴⁷ In van Mander's words, the sight of these spooks is enough to amuse even the most serious spectator:

This is why one sees few pictures by him which a spectator can contemplate seriously and without laughing, and however straightfaced and stately he may be, he has at least to twitch his mouth or chuckle.⁴⁸

The expression 'practiseeren nae de handelinge' is important since it elevates Bosch's work to a model worthy of imitation and emulation, like the art of classical antiquity. Combining the friendly and the ghastly, Pieter Bruegel's Bosch variations thus provoke a contagious chuckle or smile. Remarkably, the hostile or antagonistic elements van Mander perceives in Bosch's art seem to have been transformed into less-threatening 'drolleries' by the most gifted imitator of Bosch's 'science and fantasies'; the 'enmity' associated with Bosch's art has turned into a facetious, festive mood that engages the beholder.⁴⁹ This also applies to other artists who are viewed by van Mander as working in the manner of 'their' Bosch. Among them, Jan Mandijn from Harlem was 'clever at spectres (*ghespooock*) and drolleries (*drollerije*) very much in the manner of Jeronimus Bos'.⁵⁰ 'Veel ghespooock' and 'vreemde spoocken' are also to be found in the works of Frans Verbeeck who was 'clever at making works in watercolour in the manner of Jeroon Bosch' ('was fraey van

⁴⁷ According to Kilianus C., *Etymologicum* 98, 'drol' can refer to 'trullus, drollus', 'homo facetus, festivus, lepidus', and 'gesticulator'.

⁴⁸ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 190f. (f. 233r22–25): 'Hy hadde veel ghepractiseert/nae de handelinge van Ieroon van den Bosch: en maeckte oock veel soodane spoockerijen/en drollen/waerom hy van velen werdt geheeten Pier den Drol. Oock sietmen weynigh stucken van hem/die een aenschouwer wijslijck sonder lacchen can aensien/ja hoe stuer wijnbrouwigh en statigh hy oock is/hy moet ten minsten meese-muylen oft grinnicken.'

⁴⁹ For the hostility, by which Bosch's works address their spectators, see Koerner J., 'Bosch's Enmity', in *Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow: Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance*, ed. J.F. Hamburger (London: 2006) 285–300.

⁵⁰ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 79 (f. 205r17–18): 'Noch was te Haerlem eenen Ian Mandijn, die seer op zijn Ieronimus Bos fraey was van ghespooock en drollerije'. Van Mander mentions Mandijn on two other occasions: Mander K. van, *Lives* I 232f. (f. 243v31): '[...] was very deft at burlesques in the manner of Jeroon Bos' ('welcken seer aerdich was van drollerije op zijn Ieroon Bos'). See also *Lives* I 332f. (f. 268v35–36): 'Ian Mandijn, van Haerlem in Hollandt/welcken op zijn Ieronimi Bos, aerdich was van so drolligheden te maken'. On Jan Mandijn (active c. 1530–1559), see Silver, L., *Bosch* 372–79.

Waternverwe te maken dinghen op zijn Ieroon Bos'); these spooks were 'very inventive and well executed' (*seer versierlijck en wel ghedaen*).⁵¹

In the preface of *Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, the first part of the *Schilder-Boeck*, van Mander lists 'nachtstukken' and 'branden' among the possible subjects available to a (Netherlandish) painter.⁵² Artists specialising in this subject matter are mentioned throughout the *Lives*. Among them, the painter, architect, cartographer and engraver Lanceloot Blondeel (1488–1581) had a 'wonderfully great knowledge of architecture and antique ruins' and excelled in the depiction of 'fires in the night and suchlike'.⁵³ 'Fires' (*branden*) were also painted by Lodewijk Jansz. van den Bos from 's-Hertogenbosch whose works were in the possession of art-lovers.⁵⁴ Hans Soens from 's-Hertogenbosch painted 'smaller landscapes on panel and a few little fires' (*brandekens*).⁵⁵ The Antwerp painter Gillis Coignet, too, had 'a subtle way of painting little night scenes (*historikens in den nacht*) very inventively'.⁵⁶ In the *Grondt*, van Mander cites Coignet's *branden* among the best examples in the representation of candle-light and other artificial light sources: Coignet 'can perform miracles with paint, making the realm of Pluto burn or destroy Troy'.⁵⁷ Chapter seven on various forms of reflection ('Van de Reflecty/Reverberaty/teghen-glans oft weerschijn') in the *Grondt* contains indeed the most extensive discussion of 'branden' and 'poetic hells' (*poeetsche Hellen*):⁵⁸

Those who depict well with colours Vulcan's wrath – such horrible misery – demonstrate mastery in art: This is because they take on colours – red to purple, blue, or green – according to the food or matter by which he feeds his vehement flames, so that they soar heavenward, impossible to tame. But not only the flames, also vapours fill the air with different colours. Yes, this seems to be horrible Stygian smoke where, with many other ugly spooks, Hydra and Cerberus scream and cry. Painters need

⁵¹ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 170f. (f. 228r20–25).

⁵² Mander K. van, *Grondt* I 46f. (f. 6r).

⁵³ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 77–79 (f. 204v–205): 'Hy was een wonder verstandigh Man in Metselrije/en Antijcke ruinen/en van branden in der nacht teekenen/en dergelijcke.'

⁵⁴ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 126f. (f. 217r16)

⁵⁵ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 412f. (f. 288v38).

⁵⁶ Mander K. van, *Lives* I 306f. (f. 262r25–26): 'Hadde oock een aerdighe manier van te maken Historikens in den nacht/seer versierlijck.'

⁵⁷ Mander K. van, *Grondt* I 196f. (f. 32v): 'Met verwen can hy te wonder doen bernen | *Plutonis* stadt, oft *Troyen* doen te nieten [...]'

⁵⁸ For an extensive discussion of 'reflexy-const', see Melion W.S., *Shaping* 72f.

to see to that in order to make a fire look dreadful or to kindle a fire in the poetic underworld.⁵⁹

Van Mander further comments on depictions of the forge of Vulcan, advising the painters to consider the effects of the light of the fire and the blazing metal on the appearance of the half-naked men working at the anvil. While Jan Brueghel's poetic hells are not mentioned by van Mander, there is little doubt that these small paintings on copper were understood by contemporary beholders in similar terms: as skilful renderings of poetic underworlds; and as a demonstration of Brueghel's mastery in painting.

In about 1608, Jan Brueghel the Elder began to paint a series of allegories of fire that more closely link the Stygian regions to the realm of Vulcan as suggested in van Mander's treatise. A particularly splendid example is the *Allegory of Fire*, sent to Archbishop Federico Borromeo in December, 1608 [Fig. 6].⁶⁰ In an architectural ruin partially formed by natural rock, the uses and destructive effects of fire are shown in impressive painterly detail. While the background presents various techniques of heating, refining and shaping metals, the foreground shows a rich and magnificent collection of artefacts produced by fire. Two tables display all types of jewellery as well as an assortment of vessels wrought in silver and gold or made of porcelain. On the edge of the larger table Jan Brueghel the Elder has signed his name. Next to these luxury items indicative of aristocratic pretensions various pieces of armour are piled atop each other. Scattered across the floor are pincers, mallets, chisels as well as other tools used by goldsmiths for decorative techniques. A charcoal fire burns in a small tripod; anvils and hammers line a round

⁵⁹ Mander K. van, *Grondt* I 192–93: [Marginal note: 'Dat het Const is, wel branden te schilderen. Dat de vlammen gedaente hebben nae de stoffe, dar sy van voetsel hebbben. Dat niet alleen de vlammen van verscheyden verwen en zijn, maer oock de roocken. Van Poetsche Hellen te schilderen.'] 'Sy hebben in de Const al groot impery/ | Die wel uytbeelden Vulcanus vergrammen/ | Met veruwe/sulck grouwelijk misery: | Want nae t'gheen dat de spijs' is oft matery/ | Daer hy med' opvoedt zijn heftighen vlammen/ | Die ten Hemelwaert vliegghen/quaet om tammen/ | Daer nae hebben sy oock t'coluer ghecreghen/ | T'zy tot root/purper/blau/oft groen gheneghen. | Niet alleen de vlammen/maer oock de roocken/ | Van verscheyden verwen de Lucht vervullen/ | Jae dat t'schijnen d'afgrijselijcke smoocken | Stygij, daer met veel leelijcke spoocken/ | Hydra, en Cerberus, tieren en brullen: | Dus van de Schilders hier op achten sullen/ | Om eenen brandt schrickelijck uyt te stellen/ | Oft t'vyer te stoken in Poetsche Hellen.'

⁶⁰ *Fiamminghi e Olandesi. Dipinti dalle collezioni lombarde*, exh. cat., Palazzo Reale, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan, ed. B.W. Meijer (Milan: 2002), 137–39, cat. 81; Ertz K., *Jan Brueghel der Ältere* 374. Jones P.M., *Borromeo* 79, 237, no. 34; Crivelli G., *Giovanni Brueghel pittor fiammingo o sue lettere e quadretti esistenti presso l'Ambrosiana* (Milan: 1888).

bench. To the right, an alchemical laboratory with instruments both for metallurgy and distillation is shown at close range. Some of the bottles, phials and small glasses are labelled ‘mercuria corafatus’, ‘salmonia’ and ‘acqua’ – the represented substances referring to the alchemist’s trade (water as the opposite element of fire), and, one may assume, to the transformative quality of Jan Brueghel’s own art. A splendid chandelier of gilded copper with a single burning candle is suspended from a cavernous and indistinctly defined ceiling. The theme of fire is further developed in the landscape: Fire and smoke rise into the air; people flee from a house in flames; witches and devils gather in front of a brightly lit cave; demons take to the air.

The *Allegory of Fire* is the first painting in a series of *Four Elements* executed for Cardinal Borromeo between 1608 and 1621. In a letter dated June 3, 1608, Brueghel informs Ercole Bianchi, Borromeo’s agent, that he has now ‘the painting of fire at hand, which will be about various diabolical invention and very laborious’.⁶¹ Four months later Brueghel writes of the painting: ‘one can see all kind of armour, metal, gold, silver and fire, also alchemy and distillation, everything done from nature with outmost diligence’.⁶² From Brueghel’s correspondence with Bianchi we further know that he also executed a series of elements for him, which might be identical with the works now in the Galleria Doria-Pamphilj in Rome. While many of the motifs of the Milan *Allegory of Fire* are repeated in the Doria-Pamphilj version, the general theme of that painting is Venus visiting Vulcan’s forge; therefore, a smoking volcano is added to the scene.⁶³

The Owners of Jan Brueghel’s Hells

Several scholars have suggested that these small copper images were exchanged as gifts among a few art-loving cardinals in Rome linked to each other through friendship. Both the Colonna and the Giustiniani

⁶¹ ‘[...] che ha in mane il quadro del fuoco qual sera de vario invencion diabolica peina de lavor.’ I cite from Bedoni S., *Brueghel* 115.

⁶² Letter dated September 26, 1608: ‘[...] e de vedere oigni sorte d armeria, metalli oro argento e fuoco, ancho l’alchimio et distilattioni, tutti fatti del natural con grandismo diligenc’. I cite from Bedoni S., *Brueghel* 116.

⁶³ Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 140–45, cat. 17; Ertz K., *Jan Brueghel der Ältere* 599–600, cat. 251.

families hosted Federico Borromeo during his various visits to Rome;⁶⁴ Borromeo's palace in Rome was close to the residence of Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte.⁶⁵ Since Jan Brueghel was invited to live with Borromeo's family both in Rome and Milan, the cardinal may well have presented his friends with some of the artist's works. Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani, who had a particular liking for nocturnal scenes, owned seven of Jan Brueghel the Elder's small copper paintings which must have entered the collection in 1601 or shortly thereafter. Six of these are referred to as pairs, a *Judgement* and a *Deluge*, a *Paradise* and a *Hell*, an *Adoration of the Magi* and a *Fire of Troy*.⁶⁶ The *Judgement* and the *Deluge*, both images of crises and catastrophes as well as turning points in the history of salvation, are explicitly listed as 'compagni' or pendant pieces; an additional *Fire of Troy* is listed separately.⁶⁷

With ten works, all of them very small and painted on copper, Jan Brueghel the Elder was among the best-represented artists in the collection of Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte.⁶⁸ Among these copper images were two *Temptations of St. Anthony* and one 'fable of Euridice' which has been tentatively identified with the *Orpheus* in the Palazzo Pitti [Fig. 2].⁶⁹ Another possible owner of Jan Brueghel's hells may have been Cardinal Ascanio Colonna (1560–1608), protector of Flanders, who, in the winter of 1605–06, appointed Peter Paul Rubens's brother Philip as his personal secretary.⁷⁰ It is, however, not clear when

⁶⁴ Danesi Squarzina S., "The Collections of Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani, part I", *The Burlington Magazine* 139 (1997) 766–791, here 771, 772; Jones P., "Devotional" 89–90. For Borromeo's Roman sojourn in 1599, see also Orbaan J.A.F., *Documenti sul Barocco in Roma* (Rome: 1920) 95, note 1.

⁶⁵ Gilbert C.E., *Caravaggio and His Two Cardinals* (University Park: 1995) 128f.

⁶⁶ Danesi Squarzina S., "Collections I", 771–72, 781, nos. 74: 'Un quadretto in rame dell'Adorazione de Magi, con molte figure piccole e paesini, di mano di Brugo, con le sue cornice d'ebano'; 75: 'Un quadro simile in rame del Incendio di Troia'; 91f: 'Doi quadri di rame di mano di Brugo con cornice di ebbano uno del Giudizio et uno del dilvio, compagni e simili alli doi scriti di sopra della doratione di maggi et del Incendio di Troia'; 99–100: 'Doi quadretti in rame con cornice di ebbanno di mano di Brugo, uno del Paradiso e laltro del Inferno, con molte figure della grandezza delli quatro scriti di sopra'. Danesi Squarzina S., "The Collections of Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani, part II", *The Burlington Magazine* 140 (1998) 102–118.

⁶⁷ Danesi Squarzin S., "Giustiniani I" 781, no. 87: 'Un quadretto mezzano in rame del incendio di Troia con cornice di pero tinte negre'.

⁶⁸ Gilbert C.E., *Caravaggio* 128f.; Frommel C.L., 'Caravaggios Frühwerk und der Kardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte', *Storia dell'Arte* 9–10 (1971) 5–52, here 33, 34, 37.

⁶⁹ Frommel C.L., "Caravaggio" 33: 'Un Rame del Brucolo ne quale vi è la Favola di Euridice con cornici d'Ebano di palmi uno, e mezzo.' Gilbert C.L., *Caravaggio* 129.

⁷⁰ For Peter Paul Rubens's *Lamentation* on copper (Cummer Gallery of Art in Jacksonville, Florida), which was possibly presented to Cardinal Ascanio Colonna in late 1605

the landscapes with fires, now in the Palazzo Colonna, Rome, entered the collection. The 1714 inventory of the Colonna collection lists two pairs of paintings: an *Adoration of the Magi* is mentioned together with a *Descent of Christ into Limbo* ‘with many and diverse original figures by Brueghel’; a *Fire of Troy* is listed with a *Scene of Witchcraft*. Another *Scene of Witchcraft with Fire* is further ascribed to the ‘school of Brueghel’.⁷¹ Finally, Federico Borromeo, in addition to the *Allegory of Fire*, owned two other fiery images by Jan Brueghel the Elder: a *Hell*, featuring the traditional punishments of a Christian hell in a vast burning landscape,⁷² and the so-called *Fire of the Pentapolis*, showing Lot and his daughters fleeing from a Sodom in flames.⁷³

As I hope to have shown, in both northern and Italian treatises of art fires, hells, nocturnal scenes and scenes of witchcraft, dreams, fantasies, and imaginations are often mentioned together and treated as similar or comparable themes. While the subject matter is indeed very diverse, all these images challenge the artists to show their skills in the representation of light sources other than the sun: the moon, candlelight, torches, natural fire, and the fires of hell. Karel van Mander considers, as we have seen, the representation of fires ‘in a dark night’ and ‘with reflections’ among the most challenging artistic tasks, which require exceptional skills. Around 1600, artists, humanists, scientists and religious reformers shared an interest in shadow and light and the rules of reflections.⁷⁴ In his *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (*Considerations on Painting*) from the early 1620s, the physician and art collector Giulio Mancini (1558–1630), a contemporary of the cardinals Borromeo, Colonna, Del Monte and Giustiniani, praises a small landscape with the burning mount Etna by Jan Brueghel the Elder:

or in 1606, see Göttler C., “Affectionate Gifts: Rubens’s Small Curiosities on Metallic Supports”, in *Munuscula Amicorum. Contributions on Rubens and His Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, ed. K. van der Stighelen (Turnhout: 2006), 47–62.

⁷¹ Safarik E.A., *The Colonna Collection of Paintings: Inventories 1611–1795*. Documents for the History of Collecting, Italian Inventories 2 (Munich: 1996) 302, [858], [859], [864]. A pair of paintings, one representing ‘Orpheus and Eurydice in the Underworld’, the other one ‘Aeneas in the Elysium’ are mentioned in the 1783 inventory and ascribed to ‘Bruguel Infernale’: Safarik E.A., *Colonna Collection* 647, [442]. See also Safarik E.A., *Palazzo Colonna* (Rome: 1999) 218–19.

⁷² Jones P.M., *Borromeo* 235, cat. IA.30.a–15; Meijer, *Fiamminghi* 122f., cat. 65 (Pijl L.).

⁷³ Jones P.M., *Borromeo* 234, cat. IA.29.d–28; Meijer, *Fiamminghi* 129, cat. 74 (Pijl L.).

⁷⁴ Rzepinska M., “Tenebrism in Baroque Painting and its Ideological Background”, *Artibus et Historiae* 7 (1986) 91–112.

He worked very well in the small format. In particular, for a gentleman he made out of pleasure a landscape representing the fire of Mount Etna, with city, villages and a number of men of various nations; most of the figures were just the size of an ant, nonetheless they represented and expressed what he wished. And even more importantly, he considered here the reflections of light, which are to my taste a very artful thing and worthy of viewing.⁷⁵

But what was it that made these cardinals and art lovers delight in these poetic hells? It has been proposed that Borromeo started to collect landscapes by Jan Brueghel and other Flemish masters because his increasing duties wouldn't allow him to refresh his mind in the contemplation of nature and the creation of God; the painted landscapes would then have served as substitutes for a direct experience of nature and as meditation tools. Jan Brueghel's 'poetic hells', however, reveal views into completely artificial and fictional worlds; many of the motifs and elements can also be found in his depictions of the *Temptations of St. Anthony*, a theme the artist developed in the very same years. In the *Wilegghingh op den Metamorphosis Pub. Ovidij Nasonis* (*Interpretation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*), the last part of the *Schilder-Boeck*, Karel van Mander defines 'poetic hells' in the following way:

Concerning poetic hells, these are nothing else than various sins, as well as the calamities and catastrophes that seize the vicious and frivolous because of evil deeds, and the gnawing and biting conscience, which torments and judges.⁷⁶

A poetic hell, thus, is the interior hell of the gnawing conscience rather than the hell of eternal punishment that awaits the sinner after death. Jan Brueghel's crowded images of hells with their monstrous and frivolous details have an interesting parallel in contemporary Jesuit meditations on the inner faculties of the soul, in particular on one's own imagination. Around 1600, it had long become fashionable in

⁷⁵ Mancini G., *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, ed. A. Marucchi (Rome: 1956) I 260: 'Doppo questo vi fu [...] Broglio, di nation [...], nato in [...]. Fece in picciolo molto bene et in particolare ad un gentiluomo di diletto fece un paesaggio che rappresentava l'incendio del monte di Ethna con città, villagi et numero di huomini di diverse nationi che le figure le maggiori ero quant'una formica, nondimeno rappresentavano et esprimevano quello che desiderava; et quel ch'è più, in esse vi riservava quei reflexi dei lumi ch'a mio gusto era cosa molt'artificiosa et degna di esser vista.'

⁷⁶ Mander C. van, *Wilegghingh* f. 32r: 'Nu aengaende de Poeetsche Helle/die en is niet anders/als alderley zonden/en de ongevallicheden en rampen/die den roeckeloosen ondeugende Menschen door quade wercken overcomen en treffen/en de knagende wroegende Conscientie diese pijnight en veroordeelt.'

elite circles to practice prayer and meditation at home, and there is little doubt that our cardinals were intimately familiar with Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* and other meditation treatises that began to appear in these years. The most unique element of the *Spiritual Exercises* is the 'composition of place', which is acquired through the 'five senses of the imagination' and particularly through the 'sight of the imagination' – or the 'imaginative sense of sight', as Ignatius also calls it. The 'composition' or 'forming' or 'figuring of place' was understood as a mental activity of the soul's image-making faculty.⁷⁷ The meditation on hell, which concludes the first week of the *Exercises*, is the most powerful example of this form of meditation by application of the senses. However, there were ambivalent views about Ignatius's meditation on hell. On the one hand, imagination of that place of horror was promoted as a safeguard against the vagaries of the imaginative faculty of the soul. On the other hand, spiritual beginners were advised to avoid the uncanny, the grotesque, the frivolous and the curious, since this could easily take them to dangerous grounds.

The picture-producing imagination itself served as topic of a meditation in the *Meditaciones de los Misterios de nuestra Sancta Fe* (*Meditations on the Mysteries of Our Holy Faith*) by the Spanish Jesuit Luis de la Puente (1554–1624), first published in Valladolid in 1605, but soon translated into Latin and other European languages.⁷⁸ The imagination is one of the themes of chapter 27 treating the sins of the interior faculties of the soul. The meditation first considers vices having their seat in the understanding (ignorance, imprudence, temerity, inconstancy, perverseness and pertinacity, subtlety and curiosity); then those springing 'from myne owne will'; and finally those of the soul's interior faculties, the imagination and sensitive appetites. Here, the faithful are instructed to

⁷⁷ The literature on the Jesuit 'composition of place' is vast. Recent studies include: Fabre P.-A., *Ignace de Loyola: Le lieu de l'image. Le problème de la composition de lieu dans les pratiques spirituelles et artistiques jésuites de la seconde moitié du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: 1992); Endean P., "The Ignatian Prayer of the Senses", *The Heythrop Journal* 31 (1990) 391–418; Erdei K., *Auf dem Wege zu sich selbst: Die Meditation im 16. Jahrhundert. Eine funktionsanalytische Gattungsbeschreibung*, Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung VIII (Wiesbaden: 1990). For Jesuit discussions of the 'composition of place' in the meditation on hell, see Göttler C., *Last Things: Art and Religious Practice in the Age of Reform* (Turnhout: 2008, forthcoming).

⁷⁸ *Bibliothèque des écrivains de la Compagnie de Jésus*, ed. A. de Backer – C. Sommervogel VI, col. 1274.

ponder that my imaginative faculty, is like a hall painted with many images and figures, some foule, some prophane, and others ridiculous, monstrous, and deformed, entertaining it selfe in painting them; taking pleasure to beholde them, soliciting the understanding to gaze upon them, and oftentimes, drawing it after it to cogitate upon them.

Puente thus likens the *vis imaginativa* to both a picture gallery and an artist engaged in painting, beholding and copying the many 'monstrous' and 'ridiculous' pictures displayed in a hall. It is in this context that Puente mentions the sin 'which they call *delectatio morosa*, a continuing, or lingering delight, in matter of carnallities, revenges, ambitions, and avarices, delighting my selfe with the imagination of these things, as if they were present'.⁷⁹ Immediately followed by the examination of conscience in chapter 28, the meditation on the profuseness of pictures in the imagination was meant to have almost an iconoclastic effect in that it cleansed and emptied the mind.

Populated with ant-like spectres, monsters and shades, Jan Brueghel's fiery landscapes must have provided these cardinals both devotional and recreational experiences. The ever-changing shapes, forms, lights and reflections of Jan Brueghel's poetic hells made visible and motivated the crafting and figuring of mental images in the beholder's mind. Around 1600, Bosch's figural inventions, perceived as wondrous spectres, fancies, imaginations and inventive designs, had become collectibles among European lovers of arts. A nocturnal sky vividly coloured by smoke and flames or a dark landscape inhabited by spirits and ghosts functioned as emblems of mastery of the most aesthetic aspects of the visual arts, the representation of optical phenomena and reflections. It was, finally, the subtlety and ingenuity of Brueghel's art that lit a fire in the poetic underworld, made mountains and cities burn and incited the minds of his viewers.

⁷⁹ I cite from Puente L., *Meditations upon the Mysteries of Our Holie Faith, with the Practise of Mental Prayer Touching the Same*, trans. J. Heigham (St. Omers: 1619) I 194. See the room of the counselor Phantastes in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*: 'His chamber was dispaigned all within, | With sundry colours, in the which were writ | Infinite shapes of things dispersed thin; | Some such as in the world were never yit, | Ne can devized be of mortall wit; | Some daily scene, and knowen by their names, | Such as in idle fantasies doe flit: | Infernall Hags, *Centaurs*, feendes, *Hippodames*, | Apes, Lions, Aegles, Owles, fooles, lovers, children, Dames | [...] All those were idle thoughts and fantasies, | Devices, dreames, opinions unsound, | Shewes, visions, sooth-sayes, and prophesies; | And all that fained is, as leasings, tales, and lies.' I cite from Harvey E.R., *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: 1975) 1.

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MOVEABLE FEASTS OF REASON:
DESCRIPTION, INTELLIGENCE, AND THE
EXCITATION OF SIGHT

Bret Rothstein

An intellectual is a person whose mind watches itself.
— Albert Camus

How did people conceive of visual competency in later medieval and early modern Europe? Specifically, what intellectual value did they assign to the interpretation of pictures? This is partly a question of taste, since what one observes is sometimes taken to indicate how well one does so. More important, it also is a question of intelligence – in effect, the psychology of interpretation, which in the period covered by this essay was bound up with the movement of spirits within the brain. Since thought was believed to rely on visible images, the ability of spirits carrying those images to move about within the brain dictated the ease with which one might internalise, assimilate, and manipulate pictures. Under such circumstances, sophisticated interpretation of paintings and prints would have been thought to stem from a broader mental agility. One therefore wonders if we might ascertain the relationship between pictorial configurations and the presumed capabilities of their respective audiences. This essay is meant to set forth some preliminary thoughts on the matter. To that end, it is an attempt to treat pictures as a barometer of how people, mainly those in the fifteenth-century Low Countries, conceived of visual and mental agility.

We have fragmentary verbal evidence concerning aspects of taste. Consider the term *estrange* ('strange' – sc., witty or novel).¹ To employ this word was to express visual interest and, thereby, demonstrate a kind of perspicacity. But examples such as this are few and far between; they also tend to be limited in linguistic and socio-economic availability. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that when an attentive patron paid for

¹ See Buettner B., "Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400", *The Art Bulletin* 83,4 (2001) 604f. Unless otherwise specified, all other translations are mine.

an object, the utility of which was entirely intangible, he or she would have attended to more than simply the availability of materials and the technical capabilities of the artisan. He or she also would have taken into account the mental materials and interpretive capabilities of the expected audience for that object.

In fact, the visual record suggests that some patrons and viewers were quite sensitive to the matter. Various extant pictures not only exhibit greater technical accomplishment than others but also are visually more sophisticated – marked by subtler compositions, more complex and interpretively volatile iconographical cues, and (on occasion) a greater density of subject matter. Such traits speak to precisely the sort of attention at stake in this essay, since the configuration of a given picture results partly from expectations concerning the abilities of its anticipated audience. In this respect, we can approach variegations of visual complexity as the outer surfaces of an Aristotelian epistemology in which the subtle bodies presumed to bear thought made themselves physically manifest.

In order to control for factors such as expense and material richness or (no less important) the relationship of competency to affect, this essay will restrict itself to prints and paintings that place a relatively explicit accent on mental skill, either by claiming outright an instructional function or by replicating aspects of an educational experience (e.g., by employing the trope of question-and-answer).² The primary benefit of this restriction is that it enables us to concentrate on those images that define the cultivation of competency, and thus intelligence, as a central concern.

For three reasons this essay will also treat of the middle and upper registers of such competency. First, images that presuppose advanced intelligence provide some of the most legible examples of the issue at stake. Second, by celebrating such intelligence they evince an ideal of

² A preoccupation with material richness risks obscuring our understanding of audience, most notably in the case of prints from the early- to mid-fifteenth century. Long mistaken as cheap fare for the thick-headed, many such images seem to have appealed in large part to a wealthy, discerning, and adventurous audience. For more information, see the essays in Parshall P.W. – Schoch R. (eds.), *Origins of European Printmaking: Fifteenth-Century Woodcuts and their Public* (New Haven: 2005), especially Schmidt P., “The Multiple Image: The Beginnings of Printmaking, between Old Theories and New Approaches” 37–56. Concerning affect and competency, see Rothstein B., “Gender and the Configuration of Early Netherlandish Devotional Skill”, in Pearson A.G. (ed.), *The Face of Gender: Portraiture and Constructions Female Identity in Early Modern Europe* (Ashgate: forthcoming).

mental competency. Specifically, they treat being smart as both admirable and, interestingly, freighted with social and spiritual obligations. Third, as one might suspect, stupidity gives meaning to intelligence both through contrast and through being the source of obligation. Thus, the objective for this essay is to survey some of the more developed expressions of intelligence and, through them, lay a foundation for further study. To that end, we begin with a relatively muscular assertion of advanced mental competency and its ramifications: the *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece of Rogier van der Weyden [Fig. 1].³

The Advancement of Competency in Rogier's Seven Sacraments Altarpiece

Though it is customary to speak of this painting as a comprehensive expression of Catholic doctrine and an assertion of the authority of the Church, we should also recognise the prominent role it gives to education and thus mental potential. After all, the performance of the sacraments constitutes stewardship by clergy of an effectively helpless population; the depiction of that performance thus contrasts a skill-set particular to one group with, in effect, its absence in another. Various narrative elements reinforce this theme. For instance, the placement of Baptism in the foreground of the left panel not only establishes a vague chronological progression as the eye moves rightward. It also allows physical incapacity to serve as a proxy for spiritual need. Suspended above a baptismal font, the infant is helpless, incapable even of basic motor function: its arms dangle loosely, while the man at left supports its belly and head from underneath. We see similar cues elsewhere in the painting: the beggar slumped in the right margin of the central panel, for instance, or the dying man in the foreground of the right panel. The latter is especially informative, both because he signals our inevitable return to physical incapacity and because the inscription above him speaks of those 'sick in body and mind' (*a[n]i[m]a et corp[or]e infirmati*) – an equation of infirmities biological and spiritual.⁴ Even

³ On the dating of this work, see Schulz A.M., "The Columbia Altarpiece and Rogier van der Weyden's Stylistic Development", *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 3,22 (1971) 83. Cf. Vos D. De, *Rogier van der Weyden: The Complete Works* (New York: 1999) 223, who assigns the painting to 1445.

⁴ As translated in Vos D. De, *Rogier van der Weyden: The Complete Works* (New York: 1999) 220.



Fig. 1. Rogier van der Weyden, *Altarpiece of the Seven Sacraments*, ca. 1453–1460, 200 × 97 cm (central panel), 119 × 63 cm (side panels). Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten. Image: © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

the submissive congregants who dutifully participate in their respective rituals are suggestive in this respect.

The inscriptions above the sacraments emphasise the value of technique by casting each as a spiritual mechanism that entails a discrete physical process. No mere metaphor, passage through baptismal water (*in aqu[a] [et] pneu[m]ate baptizati*) initiates the sacraments by means of a physical process necessary for the pursuit of further spiritual work. Likewise, the application of the chrism in Confirmation ‘strengthens’ (*[con]firman[tur]*) its recipient – a notion implicit in the reiteration of that procedure both in Holy Vows and in Extreme Unction at right. And the Eucharist is defined as an object prepared by the divine for human consumption. It is, we read, a bread ‘baked on the Cross by the fire of the Passion,’ but it is also a tool forged in that same fire.⁵ Consequently, the sacraments are defined as technologies of redemption that require proper – sc., knowledgeable – use.

Though the inscriptions repeatedly trace the efficacy of the sacraments to Jesus, clergy appear here as highly trained specialists. The passage above Holy Orders parallels the initiate with Jesus, who is described as having ‘entered the Holy Place as high priest.’⁶ But as the pictorial narrative makes plain, such status does not automatically attach itself to any and all – witness the many and varied lay folk who move through the interior of the church. Rather, the office of priest requires extensive training in which one learns the rules that allow him to wear specialised clothing and perform singular acts. Insofar as Holy Vows constitute a capstone to one’s formative years in that process, that scene on the right wing signals a kind of divergence of paths, with the bulk of Christians heading toward Matrimony and an important minority moving in a direction that will see them return to the administration of the sacraments.

Consequently, the painting establishes two distinct classes, disproportionate in their representation. The first is a small number of clergy whose training and, by implication, talent find their proper application in the guidance of others. The second comprises that large body of others whose capabilities and inclinations lead them elsewhere. Though relatively thin on the ground in van der Weyden’s painting, clergy nonetheless occupy the top spot in a resulting hierarchy. A knack for certain

⁵ As translated in Vos D. De, *Rogier van der Weyden* 220.

⁶ Vos D. De, *Rogier van der Weyden* 220.

mental operations has allowed them to pursue education, and education has enabled them to acquire skills suited to a more contemplative life. True, obligation demands that one redirect those skills to a life of service. Just as a king cannot relinquish his duties to take up meditation, neither can the Bishop simply retire to a monastery; both actions would constitute the neglect of earthly responsibility.⁷ Nevertheless, the *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece defines the clergy as a class both privileged (in its capabilities and educational experience) and bound by duty (in its dedication to performing the sacraments).

The former issue is of particular importance. For, while the declaration of such privilege presumes certain obligations, it also speaks to refined competencies. Only a select few see to the needs of a spiritual community, and the actions of that few have a profound impact on the community's spiritual trajectory. That is why the strikingly middle-class populace represented in the *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece demonstrates such thorough, regular, and willing piety: the clergy in this depicted realm are of singular talent and admirable efficiency. (The lone beggar speaks to an economy both spiritual and financial that has resulted in laudable, though never total, success.)

The Value of Intelligence

Since effective rule rarely stems from allowing the village idiot to run things, the theme of stewardship in the *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece raises important questions about intelligence. This essay will use the term in its qualitative sense: that of understanding had by degrees rather than in some absolute manner.⁸ To approach the matter thus makes sense with respect to pictures since, in an art market so expansive and financially liquid as that of the early modern Low Countries, people would have tended to notice much more than simply materials, particularly as the

⁷ Jean Gerson discusses this at length in his *Montaigne de contemplation*, among other places. For the *Montaigne*, see Gerson J., *Œuvres complètes*, ed. P. Glorieux (Paris: 1960–1973) VII 16–55.

⁸ Cf. intellect as discussed by, among others, Park K. – Kessler E., in Schmit C.B. – Skinner Q. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: 1988) 453–534; Owens J., “Faith, Ideas, Illumination, and Experience”, in Kretzman N. – Kenny A. – Pinborg J. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: 1982) 440–459; and Boler J.F., “Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition”, in Kretzman N. – Kenney A. – Pinborg J., *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* 460–478.

growth of a nascent middle class rendered simple expenditure ever less effective as a mechanism for socio-economic differentiation.

It also makes sense from the standpoint of contemporaneous religious culture. The idea that individuals possessed differing mental capabilities was current in spiritual writing of early modern northern Europe. For example, Jean Gerson declares in his *Montaigne de contemplation* ('Mountain of Contemplation,' ca. 1400) that devotion is difficult; one who hopes for quick results 'would deceive himself' and would be as one who would climb a high mountain in one leap.⁹ Redemption necessitates prolonged, concentrated effort. The Middle Dutch *Het cancellierboek* ('Chancellor's Book,' ca. 1470) demonstrates that such effort entails much more than simple perseverance. A translation of two influential works by Robert de Sorbon (1201–1294), the text declares that one can enter Heaven only after being 'tested and examined' by Jesus, who serves as its Chancellor.¹⁰ According to both accounts, spiritual accomplishment depends on skills that must be acquired, refined, and maintained.

Yet the conceit employed by Robert and maintained by his translator – modelling the recuperation of the soul on university education – is noteworthy, for it associates spiritual achievement with mental proficiency. To be sure, that conceit defines cast book smarts as an illusory gain. *Het cancellierboek* tells us that schooling can never substitute for true devotion. One should attend only to the 'book of conscience;' to concern oneself with anything else – the author calls it 'studying' – is to be the most foolish of fools.¹¹ Nevertheless, the parallelism of educational achievement with religious experience demonstrates the recognition that individuals pursue both incrementally and, thus, to greater or lesser degrees. That is why Robert sees fit not only to speak of spiritual 'mastery' that must be verified but also to cite the University of Paris as the earthly counterpart to this celestial process.¹² Like the

⁹ See Gerson J., *Oeuvres* VII 41f.

¹⁰ The texts in question are *De conscientia* and *De tribus dietis*. *De conscientia* provides the academic model of redemption. All translations from the Middle Dutch draw on the edition published in a 1931 Leiden thesis: Kessen A.H.M.C., *Het Cancellierboek* (Leiden: 1931) 142.

¹¹ Kessen A.H.M.C., *Het cancellierboek* 143: 'Alsoe is die mensche boven sotten sot, diet boec der consciencien verroেকেleost ende ander dinc meer studeert ende versiert of hantiert. Want die cancellier van hemelryc, Jhesus Cristus, in anders gheen dinc prouven en sal den menschen dan int boec der consciencie.'

¹² Kessen A.H.M.C., *Het cancellierboek* 142f.: 'Als enich clerc orlof begheert te Parys, soe pliecht die cancellier van Parys die clerc te prouven ende te examineren.'

ubiquitous Big-Name College t-shirt of today, *Het cancellierboek* speaks to an economy of expression that traded in notions of intelligence.

Not surprisingly, such a currency is variable. After all, the stipulation that one must be tested evinces a hierarchy of capabilities. Not all who attend class are equally qualified to graduate (or, in the case of Heaven, matriculate). Intelligence looms large among the many factors that govern admission, retention, and graduation. Some people simply are not terribly smart. Robert does not say this; he is concerned with the undisciplined student who is too busy 'studying' all the wrong things, not the untalented one. Nonetheless, every village has its idiot.

This realisation forms the basis of an interesting treatment of intelligence in Nicholas of Cusa's *Idiota de Mente* ('Layman on Mind,' 1450).¹³ Education stands front-and-centre in this work, which begins with an orator and a philosopher in Rome for the jubilee. As the two talk, the latter inquires of mind. The orator responds by leading his counterpart to a self-declared ignoramus whose livelihood consists of carving spoons. This lowly artisan – the *Idiota* of the title – proceeds to astonish his interlocutors with an exhaustive disquisition on the topic.

Nicholas, like Robert, uses the motif of education to indicate the needlessness of formal schooling for redemption. But while the *Idiota de Mente* at first seems to minimise the importance of intelligence, this narrative conceit actually militates to the contrary. For one thing, the orator and the philosopher represent both education *per se* and the traditional strengths of those who possess it: polished speech, erudition, sharpness of wit, and so forth. Furthermore, at significant points in the discussion they augment or interrogate the analysis of their uneducated colleague. Consequently, Nicholas relies on the recognition that certain individuals are capable of, and manage to achieve, far more than their counterparts. Furthermore, having written in Latin, he aims squarely at a readership that possessed just such qualities.¹⁴ In this respect, the *Idiota de Mente* enacts intelligence. Like the *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece, moreover, it celebrates the end result of skills refined, setting forth an understanding of the highest degree for an appreciative and like-minded

¹³ All translations of this text come from Hopkins J., *Nicholas of Cusa on Wisdom and Knowledge* (Minneapolis: 1996).

¹⁴ For a brief discussion of the matter as it pertains to written expression, see Stock B., *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: 1983) 19–30.

cohort. Fortunately, the *Idiota de Mente* also lays out the relationship between physiology, intellect, and intelligence.

Visual Spirits and the Variability of Intelligence

The reliance of cogitation on the behaviour of percepts and the physiological pathways they travel is of particular importance. Building on the Aristotelian dictum that one cannot think without pictures, Nicholas declares that ‘in our reason there is nothing that was not previously in our senses’ (II 64: 12–13).¹⁵ Accordingly, he casts the brain as the location into and within which percepts are transposed – divorced from accidents of matter, stored, manipulated, and then made available to judgement. Such percepts are brought there, Nicholas tells us, by a ‘subtle spirit-of-the-arteries’ (*spiritus ille subtilis arteriarum*) that, enlivened by mind, ‘is fashioned into a likeness of the [perceptible] form, which has presented [itself as] an obstacle to [this] spirit’s motion’ (VII 100: 14–19). Having been coordinated in the Common Sense (at the front of the brain), complex sense data encompassing all five sorts of stimuli move to imagination, in which resides a spirit ‘configurable [...] to all perceptual forms’ (VII 12: 1–3).¹⁶

Imagination is the crux of the matter, for it is the faculty that provides judgement not only with things seen but also with items that result from mental fabrication (e.g., an emerald man or a flying mountain).¹⁷ Crucially, these things also include percepts generated by imagination in response to foreign concepts, events, or figures. Presented with the need to visualise something new, the spirit governing imagination combines extant mental imagery to form a synthetic entity that may then be submitted to judgement. In this respect, it serves as a kind of second perceptual experience the generative capacity of which is paramount.

Yet merely to perceive, whether individual sense data or composite mental imagery generated within imagination, is not sufficient in and of itself. Indeed, the dynamism of imagination requires a certain guidance. Nothing happens in the absence of sensory stimulation, Nicholas tells

¹⁵ Whereas Hopkins translates *ration* as ‘reason,’ I use the term ‘judgement.’

¹⁶ For more on the Common Sense, see Harvey E.R., *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (London: 1975) 43f.

¹⁷ The examples come from Avicenna. See Harvey E.R., *The Inward Wits* 44f.

us, because ‘our mind *assimilates* [sic] by conceiving – i.e., by making concepts, or intellectual viewings’ (*notiones seu intellectuales faciendo visiones*; VII 99: 7–8). But such ‘viewings’ must be subject to a higher sort of control, if they are to be of any use. For imagination, he writes, conforms itself to sense data ‘confusedly and without discriminating one state [sc., the quality of an object] from another’ (VII 100: 5–10).

Fortunately, while imagination configures itself to percepts in a ‘gross and nondiscrete manner’ (VII 102: 2–3), the adjacent power of judgement (*organum ratiocinativae*)¹⁸ operates by means of a spirit ‘which is configurable discretely and clearly to all perceptible things’ (VII 102: 4–5). Nicholas defines the two mechanisms by means of comparison and contrast. Imagination and judgement are alike insofar as both comprise quasi-perceptual faculties that operate via the movement and impedance of spirits: ‘All these configurations are assimilations for perceptible objects, since they are assimilations made through the intermediacy of corporeal (albeit subtle) spirits’ (VII 102: 3–6). Thus, sight is to imagination as imagination is to judgement. Each distils and refines the products of its precursor in pursuit of cognitive assimilation. But judgement and imagination differ in that the former enables mind to engage in a subtler and fuller grasp of percepts and, thus, concepts. Consequently, it can ascertain more completely the qualities of a given object and thereby more fully grasp the underlying significance of that object.

The swiftness of these spirits appears to be one major determinant of mental capability. For one thing, the arterial spirit from which perceptual spirits derive is, Nicholas states, the vehicle for the soul (VIII 112: 5–8). Refined and directed to the sense organs, that arterial spirit becomes the mechanism by which the soul exercises perception in its specific forms (VIII 112: 8–18). This process of refinement results in a subtle body (each perceptual spirit) that is especially rapid in its movements and sensitive to its surroundings. Of such swift spirits, the visual spirit is swiftest and most noble, he writes, because of its relationship to fire (VIII 112: 19–113: 1 and VIII 113: 18–26). Visual acumen is thus partly a function of the speed and deftness of touch that spirits manifest.

Yet while perceptual spirits are swift, they provide nothing in the way of discernment – even with respect to recognition of difference among

¹⁸ Jasper Hopkins translates this term as ‘the instrument of reason.’ Cf. note 15.

things perceived (what Nicholas calls ‘demarcation’). He states: ‘[...] in and of themselves the senses demarcate nothing. For example, the fact that when we see something we impose a demarcation on it is due not to the sense [of sight] but to the imagination, which is associated with the sense’ (VIII 114: 7–11). Imagination, for all its relative confusion, manages to establish a certain preliminary order among percepts. Crucially, it does so by means of spirits even swifter and more refined than those of perception:

In the front part of the head, in the chamber-of-imagination (*phantastica*), there is a certain spirit that is much more refined and swift than the spirit diffused throughout the arteries. When the soul uses this spirit as an instrument, this spirit becomes more subtle [sic], so that even when a thing is absent the soul apprehends the form-in-matter [sc., appearance]. This power of soul is called imagination because by means of this power the soul forms for itself the image of the absent thing (VIII 114: 12–17).¹⁹

Though modest, the improvement is important, for it enables cogitation to begin (VIII 114: 18–21). As one might expect, then, greater refinement and speed mark the behaviour of judgement:

In the middle part of the head, in that chamber that is called the chamber-of-reasoning [*cellula quae rationalis dicitur*], there is a very refined spirit – even more refined than the spirit in the chamber-of-imagination. And when the soul uses that spirit as an instrument, that spirit becomes still more subtle [sic], so that the soul distinguishes one state from another (if not a state, then something formed) (VIII 115: 1–5).

And while full understanding is still precluded by the mind’s reliance on percepts, the passage of those percepts to judgement marks the culmination of a process in which spirits and mental function undergo considerable refinement and acceleration.

We might therefore say that intelligence is characterised by not only raw power (the ability to puzzle things out sooner or later, as *Idiota* manages to do) but also agility (the ability to puzzle things out quickly and in concert, as *Orator* and *Philosophus* do over the course of their conversation with *Idiota*). It is the sort of idea that people like Peter Abelard would have found agreeable. For him, one author has noted, ‘Human reason uses images to think of any of the characteristics they exhibit, and indeed it is this ability to vary what the mind is attending

¹⁹ Others refer to imagination as *imaginativa*. See Harvey E.R., *The Inward Wits* 44f.

to without necessarily changing the contents of the imagination that Abelard thinks distinguishes human from sub-human intelligence.²⁰ More important, perhaps, it is also the sort of idea exemplified by the figure of *Philosophus*, which Nicholas uses to explain this model of mind: whereas *Idiota* exemplifies the potential for self-reflection as a kind of brute mental strength, the erudition of the philosopher exemplifies the potential for generating comparisons and establishing relationships among mental entities.

Two crucial factors govern such a combination of power and agility: physiology and training. In part *Philosophus* can instruct his colleagues concerning mind because of his extensive study, subtly refuting the idea that book smarts are entirely useless. But study reflects the realisation of mental potential, which Nicholas has linked explicitly with the ability of spirits to move quickly and readily throughout the brain. Hence, physiology rather than intellect itself determines the potential intelligence. (The latter is God-given and thus beyond question.)²¹ But physiology does not ensure the realisation of that potential, for the refinement of judgement is not innate, though individuals such as that exemplified by *Idiota* may enjoy a hypertrophied version of it. Rather, it must be trained, strengthened and directed.

This brings us to the crux of the matter. Mental function, though frequently considered in terms of its relationship to the soul, is bound up with the state of the body. Indeed, Nicholas tells us that, like sight, mind needs a physical instrument to provide it with the perceptible stimuli necessary for cogitation and, subsequent to that, redemption (IV 77: 15–20). Hence the importance of spirits for judgement: necessary for basic perception and for the conveyance of percepts to higher mental faculties, they are instrumental in the enactment of judgement itself. Thus, it follows that if those spirits operate poorly, slowly, or not at all, the judgement of the individual in question will be of a lesser calibre. As Katherine Park has noted with respect to the opinions of the Carthusian Gregor Reisch, ‘lunatics and idiots [were thought to possess] a rational soul like other men, but it was prevented from functioning normally by physical abnormalities in the brain which distorted the

²⁰ Tweedale M.M., ‘Abelard and the Culmination of the Old Logic’, in Kretzman N. – Kenny A. – Pinborg J., *Cambridge History* 153.

²¹ See note 8.

action of imagination, cogitation or the other internal senses.’²² Variegation of intelligence arises from the degree to which and ease with which spirits move about within the body.

The Values of Simplicity

Given such variegation, any educational endeavour necessitates the careful selection of those stimuli for less intelligent audiences. For instance, Gerson suggests in the *Montaigne de contemplation* that certain *idiotae* deserve access to lesser theological complexities, despite the doubts of many authorities.²³ Indeed, he implicitly recognises that many such ‘simple, unlettered people’ (*gens simples sans lettre*) are capable of such instruction, though their physical constitutions seem unqualified for higher thought.²⁴ The problem, he notes, is not one of intractable ignorance, but of finding a suitable tool with which to move the ignorant toward greater intelligence and a fuller religious experience. One should therefore seek to refine the operations of an inferior brain and its spirits by providing it with sufficient edification and nothing more. Thus, he concludes his discussion by declaring: ‘I do not intend to say something that they [his readers] are unable to comprehend well by means of the [degree of] understanding I have verified in them.’²⁵ So long as he chooses his subject matter and verbiage with care, all should be well. The degree of their intelligence having been verified, his readers will be given no more substance than their supposedly meagre minds can handle. That substance will arrive via descriptions and analyses that do not unduly tax their intelligence or, to borrow Nicholas’s formulation, the spirits that allow their minds to conform to that substance. A simpler stimulus

²² See Park K., ‘The Organic Soul’, in Schmitt – Skinner, *Cambridge History* 468. She makes this point with respect to Reisch’s *Margarita Philosophica* (‘Philosophic Pearl’) of the 1490s.

²³ Gerson J., *Œuvres* VII 16: ‘Aucuns se pourront donner merveile pourquoy de matiere haulte comme est parler de la vie contemplative, je veuil escrire en francois plus qu’en latin, et plus aux femmes que aux homes, et que ce n’est pas matiere qui appartiengne a gens simples sans lettre.’ The sense of absence or lack in his description of vernacular literacy is noteworthy, not least because he is writing for people who can read a text not written in Latin. On conceptions of literacy, see note 14.

²⁴ Like many of his contemporaries, Gerson locates women at the heart of this substandard class.

²⁵ Gerson J., *Œuvres*, VII 16: ‘[...] je n’ai entencion de dire chose qu’elles ne puissent bien comprendre selonc l’entendement que j’ai esprouvé en elles.’

allows those of inferior mental capability to make just enough meaning of just the right sort.²⁶

Making the right sort of meaning is crucial. Johannes Brugman (1400–1473) demonstrates this in the conclusion to his *Leven van Jezus* ('Life of Jesus'). Having laid out the narrative 'simply [and] with articles or points,' he makes an interesting request: 'I ask that all who should read this not corrupt it.'²⁷ Brugman's use of the term 'read' (*lesen*) is ambiguous, but it probably refers first and foremost to prelection.²⁸ In such a case, the problem would be that oral recitation allows for the omission, mispronunciation, or undue embellishment of the text. The concern is more than merely ornamental. Brugman's references to simple presentation as well as the omission of glosses and other potentially 'curious' things (*curiose dingen*) address the point in two ways.²⁹ First, having kept things simple, he avoids overloading the unruly mind.³⁰ After all, description excites imagination, which then provides judgement with percepts on which to operate.³¹ Excessive quantities of information or overly rich ornamentation will swamp judgement and preclude it from functioning properly.³² Second, and no less important, by eschewing 'many glosses and expositions' (*vele glosen of exponieringe*) he also opens the door to a broad array of interpretations. So spare and simple a work, it seems, is thus all the more vulnerable for its simplicity. No doubt this is why he also asks that 'the most learned and the wis-

²⁶ Cf. the suggestion by Geert Grote that inferior minds seek wise counsel and minimise their reliance on such stimuli. See Engen J. van (ed.), *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings* (New York: 1988) 103, 108.

²⁷ The passage comes from Moll W., *Johannes Brugman en het godsdienstig leven onzer vaderen in de vijftiende eeuw, grootendeels volgens handschriften geschetst* (Amsterdam: 1854) II 396: 'Hier eyndet die passie ons lieven Heren, sympelike bi articulen of ponten gedeilt. Ick bidde allen menschen, die se lesen sullen, dat si se niet en corrumpieren.'

²⁸ Thanks are due to Geert Warnar for his help on this point.

²⁹ Moll W., *Johannes Brugman* II 396: '[...] uut minnen is dit vergadert sonder vele glosen of exponieringe, dat is uutsettin(ge) des textes, ende sonder curiose dingen daerin te trecken.' On curiosity, see most recently Hamburger J., "Idol Curiosity", in Krüger (ed.), *Curiositas. Welterfahrung und ästhetische Neugierde in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Göttingen: 2002) 21–58.

³⁰ Cf. the prose of someone like Gerson, as discussed in Rothstein B., *Sight and Spirituality in Early Netherlandish Painting* (Cambridge: 2005) 71–74.

³¹ On mental pictures that arise in response to words, see Carruthers M.J., *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: 1990) 229–242 and idem, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: 1998) 130–133.

³² Carruthers M.J., *Craft of Thought* 125–130.

est' correct any errors in his work.³³ Small details may have profound cognitive consequences.

Though a small portion of the overall text, these scant four sentences tell us much – not least that Brugman thought of himself as residing somewhere toward the middle of an intellectual spectrum that ranged from the interpretively feeble to the exceptional, and that this spectrum bore directly on the efficacy of his work. And insofar as we are dealing here not with intellect, but rather with intelligence – the relative ease with which spirits disport themselves within the brain – Brugman's statements, like the *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece, comprise the residue of later medieval and early modern psychologies of interpretive competency.

Images of a Lesser Mind

We should take care not to conflate compositional or representational simplicity with the sort of hermeneutic simplicity and direction people like Brugman and Gerson had in mind. The Brussels *Lamentation* (ca. 1455) by Petrus Christus, for instance, is narratively quite spare [Fig. 2]. The episode resides in the extreme foreground; its figures are differentiated from one another with great care, so as to maximise the impact of the parallelism between Mary and Jesus; and the background provides relatively little additional information that would amplify or complicate the significance of the primary subject. Yet the painting is marked by fine variations of colour, posture, and facial expression, all of which invite prolonged examination as well as the subtle inflection of interpretive schema. In this respect, we might treat it as the pictorial counterpart to Brugman's omission of 'many glosses and expositions' – a minimisation of detail that enhances interpretive potential.

But some images marked by visual simplicity, such as a Middle Dutch woodcut of the Virgin and Child (ca. 1460), suggest a different function [Fig. 3]. Some details in this picture allow for elaboration; the flower in the infant's hand, for example, evokes associations with the rosary. But these details are made ancillary in two ways. First, the designer of the print keeps them few and far between, instead giving over the bulk of the composition to Mary, Jesus, and the nested frames that surround

³³ Moll W., *Johannes Brugman* II 396: 'Voert bid ick den geleerdsten ende den wisesten, vinden si yet dat quelke ludet, dat se dat uut minnen willen corrigieren.'



Fig. 2. Petrus Christus, *Lamentation*, ca. 1455, 100.5 × 192 cm. Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts.
Image: © Scala/Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 3. *Virgin and Child on a Half-Moon*, ca. 1460, 34.8 × 25.8 cm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. Image: © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.

them. The second device comprises the inscriptions, which reinforce a primary theme of Marian devotion through a process of question-and-answer: 'Who is this queen that stands here? She is given to the entire world' (upper left); 'How was she given this title? Mary became [both] mother and maiden (*maeght*, sc. virgin)' (upper right); 'How did she come into this state? Through love and charity' (lower left); 'Who will be most exalted before her? One who serves her best in life' (lower right).³⁴ In this way, the print allows its viewer only a modicum of interpretive leeway, a relatively straight and narrow hermeneutic path marked by regular signposts and minimal clutter, with which the refined arterial spirits in the brain may develop to their fullest extent. Tellingly, it also does this through a rhetoric of question-and-answer – that is the trope of instruction.

Intelligence and Competency Before a Picture

This is not to suggest that the Middle Dutch print is simplistic. On the contrary, it provides its viewer with an opportunity to move interpretively to and fro. But it does so only insofar as that movement accords with the narrow spectrum of meaning the person who commissioned this work expects the viewer to be capable of generating. Thus, the print allows only for a measure of elaborative interpretation, and that measure is relatively small in comparison to, say, a German (?) *Hand as the Mirror of Salvation* of ca. 1466 [Fig. 4]. In this print, a cluster of texts quote the Gospels in Latin; the figure of Martha at right embodies a motif of devout prayer, while that of the Magdalene at left refers to processes of self-mortification; each digit is assigned a moral ramification, with the individual joints amplifying the theme of its respective finger; and explanatory texts to either side of the hand establish themes of contrition.³⁵ The sheer densities of visual and textual information, combined with the breadth of reference these encompass, suggest a striking adaptability for the image. But such hermeneutic volatility would only have

³⁴ '(W)ie es dese conighine die hier staet/Het es alder werelt toeuerlaet/Hoe es haer/name des ghewa(echt)/Maria weerde moeder en(de) maecht/Hoe es sy gheraect aen desen state/Bi minnen oetmoet en(de) carita(te)/(Wie) wort met haer meest verheuen/(Die) haer best dient in syn leuen.'

³⁵ On the complexities of such imagery, see Sherman C.R., *Writing on Hands: Memory and Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: 2000).



been available, not to mention suitable, for a relatively well-educated and supposedly more intelligent viewer. For the lesser mind and its physically becalmed spirits, an image such as this would simply have proved overwhelming in the linguistic competency it demands, the perspicacity it cultivates, and the interpretive dynamism it admits. So, in this respect the Middle Dutch print marks a relatively lower position within the spectrum of intelligence, if one still higher than that addressed by even simpler and iconographically less ambitious imagery.

The configuration of religious pictures to match particular skills seems to have been widespread in the fifteenth century. Interestingly, it does so in a way that suggests the desire to shape specific mundane capabilities to a spiritual purpose. Consider, for instance, a Parisian Sacred Monogram of ca. 1500 [Fig. 5]. As do other such images, so does this picture cue interpretations ranging from the literal and primarily narrative (e.g., one reliant mainly on the instruments of the Passion) to the more elaborate and abstract (e.g., a response to more oblique prompts such as the intertwining of the monogram with the spear). The correspondingly broad hermeneutic range of the print puts the mentally agile viewer at a distinct advantage. Given the intended location of this image, that advantage bears directly on the significance of the image as a whole. Designed to fit within the lid of a strongbox, the Sacred Monogram served to offset the potential greed of one who owned such a box by directing that person both toward the sacrifice recounted in Passion narratives and toward a more intellectually and spiritually challenging cluster of interests. Indeed, juxtaposed with the owner's wealth, this print invited a telling response: whereas that wealth would have required the contemporaneous viewer to perform mathematical operations and to speculate about the behaviour of markets, the print promotes a very different sort of calculation. Asking the viewer to choose between two sorts of accounting, it plays on a particular kind of educational background – in this case, the acquired ability to track and manipulate numerical data – to declare the greater value of otherworldly goods. In this way, the picture affords its viewer an opportunity to apply her or his particular intelligence to other, more profound ends.



Fig. 5. *Sacred Monogram*, ca. 1500, 22.6 × 16.5 cm. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection. Image: © Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Performing Intelligence and the Seven Sacraments Altarpiece

Like the Sacred Monogram, van der Weyden's painting presumes and celebrates intelligence. More important, it also appeals to that intelligence, not least in its wealth of such edifying details as the casually literate man in the right-hand background of the central panel or the young boy in the left panel who, through both his choric gesture and his depicted movement, directs our gaze toward the Crucifixion as he departs the site of Confirmation. There is, amid this clutch of devout souls, a feast for the imagination and, thence, judgement. Familiar examples of the fare on offer include the parallelism of Eucharist and Crucifixion. Such examples are important, since they indicate a desire for the viewer to pursue an exegetical experience in which literal and metaphorical ramifications follow one another, intertwine, and fuse. That is, they evince the expectation that capable viewers will work among an array of ideas without having to shift this particular image from the mind – a process remarkably close in nature to the ideal of intelligence set forth by Abelard, among others.³⁶

More important, perhaps, van der Weyden's pictorial feast takes the form not merely of subject matter but also of specific visual form itself. Parallelism, for instance, defines both the primary episodes depicted on the central panel and the painting as a whole. Indeed, juxtapositions abound – the crucial disparity of scale between Biblical and contemporaneous figures, for instance, the grouping of earthly and angelic figures for each sacrament, even van der Weyden's careful balancing of the dense foreground scene with a similarly busy distant background – and all invite the eye to move in and among widely varied objects, figures, and activities. But to move thus is not merely to engage the eye; it also is to bring imagination and its power of demarcation to bear on the richness of the image. Only through that power may the attentive viewer appreciate the utility of that expanse of floor just beyond the Crucifixion or of the extension of clothing from this scene into the adjacent depiction of Baptism. Likewise, only through the power

³⁶ For a different approach to hermeneutic volatility in this painting, see Hammerschmidt J.H., "Rogier van der Weyden's *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*: the Intertwining of Liturgical and Devotional Practice" (M.A. thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara: 2005). Hammerschmidt rightly questions the rather crisp interpretations advanced by much recent scholarship, though one wonders how 'lay' the lay audience for this painting would have been. The question is especially pressing if, as some have suggested, the picture hung in the Chevrot family chapel at Poligny.

of imagination may one come to appreciate van der Weyden's elegant visual repetitions and variations: the rhythmic application of red across all three panels, say, or the echoing of poses from one sacrament in its lateral counterpart, or even the reciprocity of movement from chapels to aisles and back.

Such appreciation constitutes anything but a disinterested aestheticism. For these details help reinforce familiar parallelisms while also allowing the formation of various subsidiary connections among their constituent elements. In this respect, such details constitute a denser, more complicated rendition of the elegant rhyming that van der Weyden used to such effect in the Prado *Deposition* (and that Petrus adapted in the Brussels *Lamentation*). The continuity between the earlier work and the *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece is rhetorical as well as iconographical. Demonstrating a continued interest in the aims and mains of parallelism, van der Weyden establishes subtle visual relationships that may then serve as the basis for conceptual ones.³⁷ Yet these can do so only if the viewer is sufficiently perspicacious. Or, to phrase it differently, such subtlety presumes the attention of a refined visual wit, which is nothing less than the proper and efficient interaction of vision, imagination, judgement, and thus their associated spirits. Simply put, the contemporaneous viewer of this painting was expected to look at it intelligently and, through that experience, to become more intelligent as her or his various spirits became ever more refined. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that the *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece is in some sense a reverse impression of how fifteenth-century viewers thought intelligence looked.

³⁷ In this respect, he shares an important interest with Jan van Eyck. Think, for instance, of the argument set forth in Ward J.L., "Disguised Symbolism as Enactive Symbolism in Van Eyck's Paintings", *Artibus et Historiae* 29 (1994) 9–53.

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IMAGES IN THE AIR:
OPTICAL GAMES, MAGIC AND IMAGINATION

Sven Dupré

Images in the Air

In the ‘Mathematicall Praeface’ to the first English translation of Euclid (1570), John Dee introduced the reader to the optical effects of the ‘marveilous Glasse’ of his friend Pickering.

Yea, so much, to scare, that, if you, being (alone) nere a certaine glasse, and proffer, with dagger or sword, to foyne at the glasse, you shall suddenly be moved to give backe (in maner) by reason of an Image, appearing in the ayre, betwene you & the glasse, with like hand, sword or dagger, & with like quicknes, foyning at your very eye, likewise as you do at the Glasse. Straunge, this is, to heare of: but more mervailous to behold, than these my wordes can signifie. And neverthesse by demonstration Opticall, the order and cause thereof, is certified: even so, as the effect is consequent.¹

Dee based his argument for the utility of ‘perspective’, or optical knowledge, on the advantage that it offered to the user for understanding the marvellous effects of mirrors. Among these effects it was especially the ‘Image, appearing in the ayre’ that seemed to have fascinated him. These ‘images in the air’ return in Dee’s ‘Mathematicall Praeface’ under the heading of Thaumaturgike, which is ‘that Art Mathematicall, which giveth certaine order to make straunge workes, of the sense to be perceived, and of men greatly to be wondred at’. In this section Dee referred to automata, which he had seen with Oronce Fine in Paris, speaking heads, flying wooden doves and all sorts of optical marvels, in particular ‘images in the air’.

And by Perspective also straunge thinges, are done. As partly (before) I gave you to understand in Perspective. As, to see in the Ayre, a loft, the lyvely Image of an other man, either walkyng to and fro: or standyng

¹ Dee J., *The Mathematicall Praeface to the Elements of Geometrie of Euclid of Megara* (1570) (New York: 1975) b.jv.

still. Likewise, to come into an house, and there to see the lively shew of Gold, Silver or precious stones: and comming to take in your hand, to find nought but Ayre.²

What was the status of these strange apparitions of men, swords, daggers and other objects flying in the air? Were they real images projected by mirrors? Or were they the products of human imagination? This paper will attempt to answer these sorts of questions, and by doing so, recover the causes of Renaissance mathematicians' fascination with these images in the air. This fascination was widespread among authors on optics in the long sixteenth century, especially in the tradition of natural magic (of which more below). However, even sixteenth-century editors of the optical canon tapped this resource to attract interest in the works of Euclid, Alhacen and Witelo. The editors of the first published edition of Witelo's 'Perspectiva' (1535), the mathematicians Georg Tannstetter and Petrus Apianus, as well as that of the second edition (1572), now together with Alhacen's optics, Frederic Risner, a student of Petrus Ramus, singled out in their prefaces the knowledge of the causes of the appearance of 'images in the air' by means of mirrors as one of the reasons to study optics and catoptrics (and, thus, to read their new editions of the work of Alhazen and Witelo).³

Most explicit about these 'images in the air' was, however, another student of Ramus, Jean Pena, in his edition of Euclid's 'Optica' and the 'Catoptrica', then also considered to be of Euclidean authorship. Pena turned Ramus' definition of optics as 'ars bene videndi' or the

² Dee J., *Mathematicall Praeface* f. A.iv.

³ 'Habes in hoc opere, Candide Lector, quum magnum numerum Geometricorum elementorum, quae in Euclide nusqua extant, tum vero de projectione, infractione, & refractione radiorum visus, luminum, colorum, & formarum, in corporibus transparentibus atq speculis, planis, sphaericis, columnaribus, pyramidalibus, concavis & convexis, scilicet cur quaedam imagines rerum uisarum aequales, quaedam maiores, quaedam minores, quaedam rectas, quaedam inversas, quaedam intra, *quaedam vero extra se in aëre magno miraculo pendentes*: quaedam motum rei uerum, quaedam eundem in contrarium ostendant: quaedam Soli opposita, uehementissime adurant, ignemq admota materia excitent: de q umbris, ac varijs circa visum deceptionibus, & quibus magna pars Magiae naturalis, dependet [...]'. Tannstetter G. – Apianus P. (eds.), *Vitellonis Mathematici doctissimi peri optikes* (Nuremberg: 1535), quoted from the editors' introduction on the first page, my italics. See also Kühne A., "Peter Apian als Herausgeber der 'Perspectiva Communis' von Witelo", in Röttel K. (ed.), *Peter Apian: Astronomie, Kosmographie und Mathematik am Beginn der Neuzeit, mit Ausstellungskatalog* (Buxheim-Eichstätt: 1997) 233–238. For Risner's reference to 'images in the air' in the preface, see Lindberg D.C. (ed.), (1972). *Opticae Thesaurus Alhazeni Arabis libri septem, nuncprimum editi. Eiusdem liber de crepusculis et nubium ascensionibus. Item Vitellonis Thuringopoloni libri X* (New York-London: 1972) a3.

‘art of seeing-well’ on its head. The aim of optical knowledge was not only to correct vision, or ‘to judge the truth and falsehood of the visible things accurately and carefully’, but also to deceive vision (of the ignorant) insofar as all the knowledgeable participants in these optical games understood the causes of the deception (and so only the ignorant would be deceived).⁴ One of the illusionist tricks which Pena mentioned in his preface ‘De usu optices’ (1557) in this connection, made use of a mirror inside a camera obscura to project images ‘in the air’. Interestingly, Pena referred the reader to Witelo to understand the making of this image.

This part of optics, which is called catoptrics, teaches to make a mirror, which does not retain the images of objects, but reflects them in the air. Witelo has written about its composition [...] Thus, should one prohibit cunning women to fool the eyes of men with this mirror, by making them believe they see ghosts raised from death, while they see the image of some hidden child or statue in the air outside the mirror? Because what is most certain is that, if a cylindrical mirror is placed inside a room closed from all sides, and if a mask, or a statue, or whatever else, is placed outside this room, so that there is a fissure in the window or in the door of this room, through which the rays from the mask penetrate [into the room] to the mirror, then the image of the mask, placed outside the room, will be observed inside the room hanging in the air, and, since the reflections from these mirrors are highly deformed and show a misshapen image of a beautiful thing, how hideous and terrible will the image seem of a mask prepared to arouse horror and consternation.⁵

⁴ For Petrus Ramus geometry was the ‘art of measuring well’. Along the same lines, in ‘Opticae libri quatuor ex voto Petri Rami’ (1606) Ramus and his student Frederic Risner defined optics as ‘ars bene videndi’. For Ramus, see Hooykaas R., *Humanisme, science et réforme: Pierre de la Ramée (1515–1572)* (Leyden: 1958) 58f. ‘Optica est ars bene videndi. Optica suo fine definitur, qui est bene videre, id est, de veritate & fallacia visibilium accurate & exquisite judicare’. Risnerus F., *Opticae libri quatuor ex voto Petri Rami* (Cassellis: 1606) 3. See Dupré S., “Optica est ars bene videndi: From Gemma’s Radius to Galileo’s Telescope”, in Folkerts M. – Kühne A. (eds.), *Astronomy as a Model for the Sciences in Early Modern Times* (Augsburg: 2006) 355–368.

⁵ ‘Docet enim ea Optica pars, quae Catoptrice dicitur, speculum componere, quod objectorum imagines non in se retineat, sed in aëre rejiciat: de cujus compositione & Vitellio scripsit, & nos aliquid dicemus (favente Deo) cum Catoptrica explicabimus. Quid ergo prohibet mulieres versutas hoc speculo, hominum oculos ludificare, ut evocatos manes mortuorum se videre existiment, cum tamen aut pueri aut statuae alicujus delitescantis simulacrum in aëre extra speculum videant? Nam quod certissimum quidem est, fidem tamen omnem videtur excedere, Si Cylindricum speculum in cubiculo undecunque clauso statuatur, extra autem cubiculum ponatur larva, aut statua, aut quidlibet aliud, ita tamen ut in fenestra vel ostio cubiculi sit rimula aliqua, per quam radii à larva in speculum irrumpant, imago larvae extra cubiculum positae, intra cubiculum cernetur in aëre pendens. & cum reflexiones à speculis illis nonnihil

Pena's reference is to proposition 60 of book 7 of Witelo's 'Perspectiva': 'it is possible to set up a convex cylindrical or conical mirror in such a way that someone looking [into it] can see the image of particular object that is out of sight [floating] in the air outside the mirror'.⁶ It is important to realise that Witelo did not speak of a projected image, a concept which was alien to perspectivist optics. The image in the air is still perceived in the mirror; 'in the air' referred to a geometrical location, a location in visual space, not physical space. A. Mark Smith has shown that 'what Witelo really means in this proposition, however, is that the image will be located behind the reflecting surface at a point outside the circle of curvature defining the invisible portion of the mirror'.⁷ In [Fig. 1], the image of B, an object-point blocked from direct view by the wall FG, is seen at I from the viewpoint A, outside the arc defining the invisible portion of the mirror, but still behind the arc XDY defining its visible portion.

The geometrical location of an image 'in the air' outside a convex mirror was well known among authors on optics of the period. In 'Della prospettiva', a manuscript of the early fifteenth century attributed to Giovanni Fontana, the author discussed the case of the location of an image outside a convex mirror.⁸ [Fig. 2] It is unclear, however, how this optical knowledge was connected to the same author's argument that 'it will, consequently, not appear to you something magical when for some time someone sees an appearance in the air as if it was a city or people that move in the air'.⁹ In 'De speculis comburentibus libri 5' (1558), a manuscript on burning mirrors, also Dee showed how an 'image in the air' was seen outside a convex mirror.¹⁰ However, as

deformes sint, ut rei speciosae deformem imaginem ostentent, quàm terra & terribilis videbitur imago larvae ad horrorem & consternationem comparatae?' Pena J., "De usu optices Praefatio", in Ong W.J. (ed.), *Petrus Ramus – Audomarus Talaeus: Collectaneae praefationes, epistolae, orationes* (Hildesheim: 1969) 140–158, 157.

⁶ 'Possibile est speculum columnare vel pyramidale convexum taliter sisti ut intuens videat in aere extra speculum imaginem rei alterius non vise'. Lindberg, *Opticae thesaurus* 308f.

⁷ Smith A.M., "Reflections on the Hockney-Falco Thesis: Optical Theory and Artistic Practice in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries", *Early Science and Medicine* 10 (2005) 163–185, 178f.

⁸ Parronchi A., *Studi su la dolce prospettiva* (Milan: 1964) 620.

⁹ 'Non ti parrà adunque cosa magica se per tempo alcuno vedessi alcuna apparitione nell' aere, come sarebbe città, o vero huomini che si movessino per l'aere'. Parronchi, *Dolce prospettiva* 631.

¹⁰ Bodleian Library (Oxford), MS Cotton Vitellius C. VII, 279r–308v, 305v.

between you and the mirror. An image also appears outside in columnar and pyramidal mirrors, as is taught in perspective.¹¹

Excerpts of the ‘Secretum philosophorum’ were widely circulated and copied in the fifteenth century. This experiment, in particular, appeared alongside a fifteenth-century English copy of Roger Bacon’s ‘De multiplicatione specierum’ and ‘Perspectiva’.¹² The connection, which this manuscript established with the work of Bacon, was not coincidental. It is well-known that Bacon’s work, such as his ‘Epistola de secretis operibus artis et naturae’ which cited optical marvels of the same sort, was an important factor for Dee’s interest in optics, mirrors, and – we might assume – images in the air.¹³ Goulding has argued that the ‘Secretum philosophorum’, which shared with Bacon an interest in visual deception, might be read, on a more general level, as an attempt to realise Bacon’s ‘experimental philosophy’, or his programme to attribute philosophical importance to ‘experiments’.¹⁴ We might then consider Pena’s ‘De usu optices’ an attempt at the restoration of the connection between optical experiments, such as those found in ‘Secretum philosophorum’, and the causes of these magical appearances, discussed – as with the ‘images in the air’ – in perspectivist optics.

Pena clarified the geometry of these images in the air. It should be clear that in convex mirrors, nor in concave mirrors, these images are to be confused with real images (as we would say today).¹⁵ However, in the sixteenth century, a period in which this modern theory of optical imagery was still to be elaborated, confusion about the geometry of these images persisted, perhaps especially in the tradition of natural magic. In his ‘Paralipomena’ (1604) Johannes Kepler revealed the confusion between these ‘images in the air’ and the images projected on a piece of paper in the ‘Magia naturalis’ (1589) of Giovanni Battista Della Porta, and on this basis, he developed his own theory of optical imagery which made a clear distinction between *imago* and *pictura*, a first step towards the modern distinction between real and virtual

¹¹ Goulding R., “Deceiving the Senses in the Thirteenth Century: Trickery and Illusion in the Secretum philosophorum”, in Burnett C. – Ryan W.F. (eds.), *Magic and the Classical Tradition* (London-Turin: 2006) 135–162, 156.

¹² Goulding R., “Deceiving the Senses” 142.

¹³ For Dee’s interest in Bacon’s optical work, see Clulee N.H., *John Dee’s Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (London-New York: 1988) 52–7, 68–9.

¹⁴ Goulding R., “Deceiving the Senses” 139.

¹⁵ Especially enlightening on this point is Smith A.M., “Reflections” 178–180.

images.¹⁶ In this essay, however, we will be less concerned with the role of 'images in the air' in the development of the geometry and theory of optical imagery.

Our focus will rather be on the 'physiology' of these 'images in the air'. It is, in this connection, interesting to note that the image in the air of which Pena speaks in 'De usu optices', as quoted above, was 'highly deformed'. 'How hideous and terrible will the image seem of a mask prepared to arouse horror and consternation', Pena added. Monsters, devils, demons and other strange apparitions were, indeed, the dominant images which magicians produced. An early-fifteenth-century example is in the 'Bellicorum instrumentorum liber' of Fontana. In this treatise on military machinery he pictured a kind of magic lantern designed to show images of demons, apparently to terrify the enemy. [Fig. 3] I will show that the monstrous or devilish deformation of these images in the air is a significant reference to the substance of which they were considered to be made. In this essay I will argue that their demonic appearance unmasks these images in the air as products of the imagination. In the first section I will locate the 'images in the air' in the realm of the marvellous and the preternatural. We will see that the imagination was often evoked to explain marvellous phenomena. In the next section we will discuss the contemporary physiology of imagination. This discussion will show that the 'images in the air' were 'spirits unseen' made visible.

Wonder, Optical Games, and Natural Magic

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries strange apparitions and optical illusions were often produced in the context of optical games. At the courts in Dresden and Prague courtiers participated in such optical games inside a princely *Kunstkammer* with the optical objects collected there. In this connection, it should not surprise us that Horst Bredekamp has recently characterised the *Kunstkammer* as a *Spielkammer*.¹⁷ For example, a crystal ball, a gift presented to August I, the Elector of Saxony, by the Duke of Savoy in 1580 and prominently displayed

¹⁶ See my "Kepler's Ludi inside the Camera Obscura", forthcoming.

¹⁷ Bredekamp H., "Die Kunstkammer als Ort spielerischen Austauschs", in Gaehthgens, T.W. (ed.), *Künstlerischer Austausch. Artistic Exchange. Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte Berlin, 15.-20. Juli 1992*, (Berlin: 1993) 65-78.



Fig. 3. A magic lantern. From Giovanni Fontana, *Bellicorum instrumentorum liber*, Cod. Icon. 242, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, ca. 1420–1440, fol. 70r.

in the most important room of the Dresden Kunstkammer, was most likely intended to be used in optical games centred on the 'effects and powers of the crystal'.¹⁸ In Prague Rudolf II was highly interested in optical games and in Della Porta's 'Magia naturalis', as Kepler wrote in a letter to the Dresden court in December 1610.¹⁹ At the same Dresden court telescopes were collected and displayed in the Kunstkammer in the playful context of anamorphoses and perspectival instruments to produce these deformed images.²⁰ Anamorphic images, which were only intelligible when looked from the side (if perspectively distorted) or when reflected in a conical or cylindrical mirror, became widely fashionable optical games with a sometimes religious meaning in the early seventeenth century.²¹ [Fig. 4]

In his book on natural magic Della Porta discussed numerous optical games, which made use of the image formation capacities of lenses, mirrors and camera obscura's. The wide circulation of this book indicates that participation in these optical games was not the privilege of courtiers with access to princely collections. For example, in early seventeenth-century Antwerp, wealthy merchants embellished their houses with a richly decorated cabinet with a *perspectieffe*. This was an opening in the cabinet that was covered on all sides with plane mirrors placed at angles to each other in a hexagonal or octagonal pattern.²² [Fig. 5] The optical games in which the owner and visitors to the house were

¹⁸ The specialised book collection within the Kunstkammer included a manuscript giving a 'Description of the effects and powers of the crystal given by the Duke of Savoy to the Elector, Duke August of Saxony'. The manuscript is only known from its title in the early Kunstkammer inventories. See Watanabe-O'Kelly H., *Court Culture in Dresden: From Renaissance to Baroque* (New York: 2002) 254. The crystal ball itself is preserved in the Grünes Gewölbe of the Dresden State Art Collections. For more details on the fate of this crystal ball, see Dupré S. – Korey M., "Optical Objects in the Dresden Kunstkammer: Lucas Brunn and the Courtly Display of Knowledge", in *Scientific Instruments and Collections* (Florence: forthcoming).

¹⁹ Kepler to Anonymous in Dresden, 18 December 1610, in Kepler J., *Gesammelte Werke* (eds. W. Von Dyck – M. Caspar – F. Hammer), 21 vols. (Munich: 1938–1988) 16: 347. For the intellectual climate at the Prague court of Rudolf II, see Evans R.J.W., *Rudolf II and his World: A Study in Intellectual History 1576–1612* (Oxford: 1973), especially for the importance of Della Porta and his natural magic at the Rudolfiner court, see p. 197.

²⁰ Dupré S. – Korey M., "Optical Objects in the Dresden Kunstkammer".

²¹ Baltrusaitis J., *Anamorphic Art* (Cambridge: 1977).

²² Fabri R., "Experiment en doctrina: Optische spelletjes in spiegelkamers van Antwerpse cantoren en het ontraadselen van exempla", in De Jongste J. – Roding J. – Thijs B. (eds.), *Vermaak van de elite in de vroegmoderne tijd* (Hilversum: 1999) 241–261; Fabri R., "Perspectiefjes in het spel. Optische 'Spelereien' in Antwerpse kunstkasten uit de zeventiende eeuw", *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 14 (1998) 109–117.



Fig. 4. Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors*, 1533, 207 × 209.5 cm.
National Gallery, London, inv. 1314.



Fig. 5. Art cabinet, mid-17th century, 160 × 110 × 47 cm. Antwerp, Museum Rockox, KBC Bank NV, Erwin Donvil, inv. 77.144.

invited to participate involved the movement of eyes and heads, fingers and objects, such as coins, to see the ever-changing and multiple reflections, similar to those described in Della Porta's natural magic.

These examples should suffice to show that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries images, including those anamorphically deformed, and monstrous apparitions 'in the air' produced by mirrors and magic lanterns, were a form of social play. But what does this tell us about these 'images in the air'? The playful context of production of these images is significant as to their epistemological status. Paula Findlen has shown that in this period no distinction was made between *ludus*, or social play, and *lusus*, intellectual play or the jokes of nature and the jokes of knowledge that populated the contemporary collections and texts.²³ In recent years numerous historical studies have convincingly argued that contemporaries used the category of *lusus* to grasp the preternatural.²⁴ The realm of the preternatural consisted of those 'wonders' or marvellous events and objects that fell outside the ordinary course of nature, but of which the cause was nevertheless not supernatural. Findlen has also shown that the notion of *lusus* incorporated the vocabulary of optical illusion.²⁵ In early seventeenth-century works of Jesuits, such as Athanasius Kircher or Gaspar Schott, and anamorphoses-producing Minims, such as Jean-François Niçeron, *ludere* and *illudere* went together. Anamorphic images were conceptualised in terms of *lusus*. The images of Giuseppe Arcimboldo, highly appreciated paintings at the court in Prague, were also conceptualised as 'serious jokes'.²⁶ We should, however, also recognise the jocular character of the deformed 'images in the air'.

The role of optical illusion in making the category of the preternatural intelligible seems now to be reasonably well understood, but the consequences of the merging of *ludere* and *illudere* to the epistemological status of the optical images themselves has been left unexplored. If Della Porta's optical games were paradigmatic for the intellectual category of *lusus*, what were then the consequences of the jocular character of these

²³ Findlen P., "Jokes of Nature and Jokes of Knowledge: The Playfulness of Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe", *Renaissance Quarterly* 43 (1990) 292–331.

²⁴ The *locus classicus* is Daston L. – Park K., *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150–1750* (New York: 1998).

²⁵ Findlen P., "Jokes of Nature" 322–324.

²⁶ Kaufmann T.D., "Arcimboldo's Serious Jokes: 'Mysterious but Long Meaning'", in Selig K.L. (ed.), *The Verbal and the Visual: Essays in Honor of William S. Heckscher* (New York: 1990) 59–80.

‘images in the air’ to their epistemological status? In the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the ‘images in the air’, and the optical apparatus producing them, were the central objects of debate in the negotiation of the boundaries between natural and demonic magic. If the ‘images in the air’ were indeed to be situated in the realm of the preternatural, their boundary status should not surprise us. The jocular and the demonic were mutually complementary forces in Renaissance culture.²⁷ The monstrous or devilish content of the ‘images in the air’, indeed, seems to point to the agency of demons in the production of these images. Nevertheless, others turned to these ‘images in the air’ precisely to unmask the claims of demonic magic. As we will see, these authors found allies in those who reduced witchcraft to the creation of optical illusions.

Several writers on optics tried to show that the ‘images in the air’ were the products of natural magic ‘in which’ – according to Benito Pereira’s definition – ‘wonders are created by the individual artifice of certain people who make use of things which are natural’.²⁸ One of them was Pena who claimed that one of the uses of optical knowledge consisted of the unmasking of the forgery of magicians involved in catoptromancy, divination and demonic magic. Pena argued that their illusionist tricks were based on nothing but natural optical knowledge.

What should someone fear who has learned from optics to construct a mirror, in which one and the same thing is seen one hundred times...; who understands to place a mirror so that in it you see those things which happen in the streets and houses of strangers? who knows that there certainly is a place, at which, if you look into a concave mirror, you will see but your eye? who knows that a mirror from plane mirrors can be constructed so that, he who looks into it, sees his image flying? Tell me, he who understand these things from optics,...does he not distinguish forgery and imposture from the truly physical things?²⁹

²⁷ This point is well made by Claudia Swan for early modern Holland. See Swan C., *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques De Gheyn II (1565–1629)* (Cambridge: 2005) 133.

²⁸ As quoted in Ankarloo B. – Clark S. – Monter W., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials* (London: 2002) 161.

²⁹ ‘Quid enim reformidabit is qui ex Opticis didicerit, speculum construi posse, in quo unus & idem videat sui centum aut eo plures imagines choreas ducentes? Qui intel ligat speculum ita collocari posse, ut in eo videas ea quae fiunt & in vicis & in alienis aedibus? Qui sciat certum esse locum, & quo si inspicias speculum concavum, tuum oculum tantummodo visurus sis? Qui sciat speculum è planis speculis ita construi posse, ut qui se in eo aspiciat, suam imaginem volantem videat? Cedo, qui ista ex Opticis

Pena allowed the ‘truly physical things’ of natural magic, which Della Porta defined as ‘the practical part of natural philosophy, which produceth her affects by the mutual and fit application of one natural thing unto another’, but he was opposed to another kind of magic, which Della Porta called ‘sorcery’, in which magicians allegedly used demons and evil spirits.³⁰ Only those ignorant of the optical knowledge at the basis of illusionistic games will believe that a demonic agency is responsible for their production, Pena argued. But why did these ‘images in the air’ become a central object of discussion in the negotiation of the boundary between natural and demonic magic? We will attempt to answer this question in the next section by looking at the role of optics in theories of demonology and witchcraft.

Demons, Spirits, and Imagination

‘In early modern Europe’, Stuart Clark has argued, ‘it was virtually the unanimous opinion of the educated that devils, and, a fortiori, witches, not merely existed in nature but acted according to its laws. They were thought to do so reluctantly and... with a good many unusual, or preternatural manipulations of phenomena, yet they were always regarded as being inside the general category of the natural’.³¹ That the place of demons is in nature was also the opinion of one of the foremost catholic experts on demonology and magic, the Antwerp Jesuit Martin del Rio. In ‘Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex’ (1599) he was always careful to distinguish between supernatural and preternatural powers. Del Rio strongly opposed two kinds of magic, the first supernatural and the domain of divine intervention, the second preternatural and the domain of humans, but also of demons and angels. Thus, demons

intelliget, nonné mulierum Thasselicarum praestigias facilè agnoscet? Nonné fucum & imposturam à rebus verè physicis distinguet?’. Pena J., “De usu optices” 158.

³⁰ ‘There are two sorts of Magick: the one is infamous, and unhappie, because it hath to do with foul spirits, and consists of Inchantments and wicked Curiosity; and this is called Sorcery; an art which all learned and good men detest; neither is it able to yeeld any truth of Reason or Nature, but stand meerly upon fancies and imaginations, such as vanish presently away, and leave nothing behinde them [...] The other Magick is natural; which all excellent wise men do admit and embrace, and worship with great applause [...]’. Porta J.B., *Natural Magick* (ed. D.J. Price) (New York: 1957) 1.

³¹ Clark S., *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: 1997) 152.

collaborated with humans, but they did this by manipulating only natural means.³²

But why was optical knowledge relevant to early modern demonologists? In this connection, it is important to realise that the devil was thought to possess enormous capacities of illusionism and deception. As we have seen, demons might have been allowed the skill to produce real effects in nature, but whenever they were confronted with their limitations in this regard, they could also overcome them by creating apparent effects which only experts in demonology were able to distinguish from real effects. Demons ‘could displace one object with another so quickly that transmutation appeared to occur, present illusory objects to the senses by influencing the air or wrapping fantastic shapes around real bodies, and, at the same time, delude all the third parties involved so that no contradictory testimony was available’.³³ In short, they could masterly deceive the senses. As a consequence of demons’ agency in nature as well as their deceptive capacities, three options – as Koen Vermeir has recently summarised them – were available for those in search of the causes of curious phenomena in the early modern period.³⁴ Firstly, God, nature or demons could cause real effects. Secondly, the same agents could cause only apparent effects. Thirdly, the use of human art – sometimes considered fraudulent – created apparent effects that could deceive the senses.

As we have seen, Pena argued that sorcerers’ illusionist tricks were based on nothing but natural optical knowledge. This argument was often repeated in the later sixteenth century in the context of witchcraft scepticism. In Reginald Scot’s ‘The Discoverie of Witchcraft’ (1584) radical witchcraft scepticism went together with a belief in natural magic.³⁵ ‘If I affirme, that with certeine charmes and popish praiers I can set an horsse or an asses head upon a man shoulders, I shall not be beleaved; or if I doo it, I shall be thought a witch. And yet if J. Bap. Neap. [Della Porta] experiments be true, it is no difficult matter to make

³² Del Rio M., *Investigations into Magic* (ed. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart) (Manchester-New York: 2000) 57. See Gorman M.J. – Wilding N. “Athanasius Kircher e la cultura barocca delle macchine”, in Lo Sardo E. (ed.), *Athanasius Kircher: Il Museo del Mondo* (Rome: 2001) 217–237, 233.

³³ Clark S., *Thinking with Demons* 166.

³⁴ Vermeir K., “The ‘Physical Prophet’ and the Powers of the Imagination. Part I: A Case-Study on Prophecy, Vapours and the Imagination (1685–1710)”, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 35 (2004) 561–594, 586.

³⁵ See Clark S., *Thinking with Demons* 249.

it seeme so', Scot expressed his belief in Della Porta's natural magic.³⁶ Of all optical experiments 'the wonderous devises, and miraculous sights and conceipts made and conteined in glasse, doo farre exceed all other; whereof the art perspective is verie necesserie'.³⁷ Unsurprisingly, Scot mentioned 'images in the air' among the effects produced by these wonderful mirrors.

Others [glasses] are so framed, as therein one may see what others doo/in places far distant; others, wherby you shall see men hanging in the aire; others, whereby you may perceive men flieng in the aire; others, wherin you may see one coming, & another going; others, where one image shall seem to be one hundred, &c....others, that represent not the images received within them, but cast them farre off in the aire, appearing like aierie images³⁸

Witches' illusionist tricks were based on natural optical knowledge, but – so one may ask – what did make witches themselves believe in their witchcraft? Scot claimed that 'such things as we being bewitched doo imagine, have no truth at all either of action or essence, beside the bare imagination'.³⁹ In declaring witchcraft itself to be an illusion Scot followed Jan Wier's 'De praestigiis daemonum' (1563). Wier argued that witches were deceived by the Devil.

With subtlety and inimitable cunning this [evil] spirit mocks and deludes these instruments of his who incline toward his promptings, these poor feeble-minded, bewitched, and idle women, whom he so maddens that – twice wretched! – they falsely believe...that they themselves have done all the things that he puts into their imagination, or all the evils that have been committed by him...with God's secret permission, or all the mocking illusions that he presents to their view by means of his trickery. And yet, all of these things are known to them only through phantasms or dreams.⁴⁰

In other words, Wier and Scot argued that sorcery depended upon the Devil's ability to deceive by way of the imagination. That the Devil deluded by exciting man's imagination and by his capacity to project (mental) images was, in fact, a widely shared opinion in the late sixteenth

³⁶ Scot R., *The discoverie of witchcraft* (ed. B. Nicholson) (London: 1886) 257f.

³⁷ Scot R., *The discoverie of witchcraft* 258.

³⁸ Scot R., *The discoverie of witchcraft* 258f.

³⁹ Scot R., *The discoverie of witchcraft* 260.

⁴⁰ Mora G. – Kohl B. – Shea J. (eds.), *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance. Johann Weyer, De praestigiis daemonum* (Binghamton, NY: 1991) 195.

century.⁴¹ For example, in 'Of monsters and marvels' (1573) Ambroise Paré explained sorcery as an illusion and, like Wier before him and Scot after him, stressed the role of imagination in causing witchcraft. Demons 'obscure the eyes of men with thick clouds that scramble our minds giddily and deceive us by satanic impostures, corrupting our imaginations through their buffooneries and impieties'.⁴² In short, demons deceived vision by making man's deluded imagination project images which man wrongly took for real events.

Such arguments were supported by a widely shared physiology of perception. Renaissance philosophers considered *spiritus* the 'first instrument' of the soul.⁴³ It was also thought to be directly affected by the imagination, one of the internal senses.⁴⁴ Complex theories about the various kinds of *spiritus* and their functions should not concern us here, but we should note that *spiritus* played an important role in theories of magic and demonology. An essential basis of magic – in theories championed by Ficino and attacked by opponents of magic such as Del Rio – was thought to be the transmission of the *vis imaginativa* by the human spirit.⁴⁵ Magicians tried to control the *spiritus*, which connected the human spirit and the imagination with the cosmos. The importance of spirits in demonology derived from the problem of how demons could act on matter. The solution to this problem consisted of granting demons (and angels) a pneumatic (aerial or ethereal) vehicle.⁴⁶ *Pneuma*, a notion of Stoic origin, was semi-spiritual and semi-material. For Galen, *pneuma* was also instrumental in the process of vision.⁴⁷ Visual spirits or optic *pneuma* was sent from the brain to the eyes through the optic nerves. The notion left its marks in medicine, but the same substance was also thought to pervade the cosmos in a highly influential neo-stoic theory.

⁴¹ For Wier, Scot, and the role of imagination in witchcraft, see Swan C., *Art, Science and Witchcraft* 157–184.

⁴² Paré A., *Of Monsters and Marvels* (ed. J.L. Pallister) (Chicago-London: 1982) 91, quoted in Swan C., *Art, Science and Witchcraft* 183.

⁴³ Park K., "The organic soul", in Skinner Q. – Kessler E. – Krayer J. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: 1988) 464–484, 469.

⁴⁴ For theories of the internal senses, see Steneck N.C., "Albert the Great on the Classification and Localization of the Internal Senses", *Isis* 65 (1974) 193–211.

⁴⁵ Walker D.P., *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: 1958) 179.

⁴⁶ For *pneuma*, demonology and the imagination, see Vermeer K., "The Physical Prophet" 569–575, 581f.

⁴⁷ Lindberg D.C., *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago-London: 1976) 9–11.

For example, in 'De usu optices' Pena followed neo-stoic cosmological ideas in denying the Aristotelian distinction between heaven and earth and in claiming that there was only one substance, *pneuma*.⁴⁸

However, most important in this context, it was also thought that it was the substance of demons. It was this substance that also made demons visible. For example, in a section on 'how can an evil spirit make itself visible to the eye of the flesh when it has no body?', Del Rio described how demons become visible by attracting vapours and exhalations.

I doubt whether he [the Devil] can choose his material simply from the air, and I do not think he can condense air alone to the point where he produces something solid. But whether he can or cannot, he usually finds it easy to mingle parts of air (the element he uses most), earth, water, cloud, vapour, and exhalations with the result that he easily produces colours from this mixture and easily condenses them into parts of a body and makes them stick together.⁴⁹

It was, thus, these vapours and 'spirits' that made the evil spirit visible. *Pneuma* was considered to be the substance of dreams, strange apparitions, etcetera. In short, it was the substance of the imagination, which could project its images on these 'spirits'.⁵⁰ Thus, when demons acted on humans, they did this by disturbing these 'spirits' of the imagination.

Demons were then most appropriate images to appear in the air. These images in the air were produced according to the laws of nature, and, as Pena stressed in 'De usu optices' quoted at the start of this essay, the use of natural optical knowledge suffices for their production. The demonic content of these 'images in the air', however, is most appropriate, since it stressed that these images were products of the imagination. These monstrous 'images in the air' were, thus, fundamentally psychological. Interestingly, this made the 'images in the air' the rule rather than the exception. With regard to the definition of an image

⁴⁸ For stoic influence on seventeenth-century cosmology, and Pena's, in particular, see Barker P., "Jean Pena (1528–58) and Stoic Physics in the Sixteenth Century", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985) 93–107. See also Barker P., "Stoic Contributions to Early Modern Science", in Osler M.J. (ed.), *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought* (Cambridge: 1991) 135–154; Barker P. – Goldstein B.R., "Is Seventeenth Century Physics Indebted to the Stoics?", *Centaurus* 27 (1984) 148–164.

⁴⁹ Del Rio M., *Investigations into Magic* 112.

⁵⁰ See Vermeer K., "The Magic of the Magic Lantern (1660–1700): On Analogical Demonstration and the Visualization of the Invisible", *British Journal for History of Science* 38 (2005) 127–159, 133.

in the optical tradition, Kepler rightly stressed in his *Paralipomena*: ‘An image [*imago*] is the vision of some object conjoined with an error of faculties contributing to the sense of vision. Thus, the image is practically nothing in itself, and should rather be called *imagination*’.⁵¹ It was ‘spirits unseen’ that made these ‘images in the air’, ‘practically nothing in itself’, visible.

⁵¹ ‘Breviter, imago est visio rei alicuius, cum errore facultatum ad visum concurrentium coniuncta. Imago igitur per se penè nihil est, imaginatio potius dicenda’. Kepler J., *Gesammelte Werke* 2: 64, translation in Kepler J., *Optics: Paralipomena to Witelo & Optical Part of Astronomy*, trans. W.H. Donahue (Santa Fe: 2000) 77.

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MATERIAL GAZES AND FLYING IMAGES IN MARSILIO FICINO AND MICHELANGELO

Berthold Hub

Theories of Vision in Antiquity

Theories of vision in antiquity can be broadly divided into two groups: firstly, theories that assume that, from the surfaces of all objects, there is a constant and rapid stream of fine layers of atoms, material images – a kind of double – that is released as if in thin coats and flows to the eyes and is absorbed by them. This conception is assumed by Democritus, Epicurus, Lucretius, and other representatives of the atomistic philosophy. Secondly, theories that assume there are material rays which, conversely, stream out from the eyes and meet the objects in the field of vision. These theories include not only the visual-ray cone of mathematicians such as Euclid and Ptolemy, but also the fiery rays of the Pythagoreans, Plato's *synaugia* (radiating together) of inner and outer fire, and the visual ray consisting of a mixture of *pneuma* and air in the Stoic tradition, which was adopted by Galen's school of medicine.¹

Common to all of these theories is the way in which vision is regarded as a haptic process – i.e., the basic assumption that vision requires physical contact between the viewer and the object being viewed. Extramission and intromission theories differ in this respect only in the way in which they answer the question of which side the movement leading to physical contact starts from. The fact that physical contact is involved is immediately evident in the atomistic view, which assumes the existence of an atomic and thus material double of the objects that meet the eye in an unchanged order. However, the extramission theory also assumes physical contact. Its visual rays are in no sense mere geometric abstractions intended to allow questions of perspective to be analysed. Instead, they involve physical entities. These entities are of a material

¹ See in particular Lindberg D.C., *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: 1976) and Simon G., *Le Regard, l'être et l'apparence dans l'optique de l'antiquité* (Paris: 1988).

(more or less fiery) nature, extend spatially, continue in straight lines, and are deflected by an obstacle such as a mirror, or interrupted by an obstacle such as water.² From Heron of Alexandria to Ptolemy, the reflexion of the visual ray is compared with the rebound of a missile, and this conception needs to be taken literally.³

However, the visual ray emitted by the eye is not only of a material nature, but is equipped in addition with a facility for sensation – and thus with sensation that takes place *outside* the body. The expression ‘outside the body’ is not really accurate, as the visual ray can only be regarded as a kind of excrescence from the body, an ephemeral organ that is capable of *feeling* the objects in the visual field even at the greatest distance and extension. As early as Hipparchus, there is an explicit comparison with the hand: the ends of the rays emitted by the eyes touch the bodies in the external world in the way that hands do, and then return to the eye.⁴ The pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata* declare that ‘what is seen is seen through the contact (touching) of the visual rays.’⁵ Apuleius reports the assumption by numerous philosophers that ‘our visual rays [...] as soon as they fall on a solid, shining and smooth body, spring back at the same angle that they enter to the face from which they emanated, and in this way depict what they *touch and see externally* within the mirror.’⁶ Ptolemy holds a similar view, according to which ‘objects are apprehended (as) concave by means of the surfaces of convex bases (defined by impinging visual rays), whereas objects are apprehended (as convex) by means of the surfaces of concave bases, just as such objects are perceived by touch, convex ones being apprehended through the concavity of the encircling hand, and concave

² See, for example, Damianus, *Optics* 12: ‘That we see what we see through our visual ray either meeting objects directly or being interrupted and reflected, or passing through a medium and being interrupted thereby.’ In *Damianos Schrift über Optik. Mit Auszügen aus Geminus*, Greek-German edition, ed. R. Schöne (Berlin: 1897) 5; cf. also Cleomedes, *Caelestia* II.6; Apuleius, *Apologia* 15; Ptolemy, *Optics* III.3 and more often; Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* VII.5; and the citations given in the following footnote.

³ Heron of Alexandria, *Catoptrics* 2–3; Ptolemy, *Optics* II.20 and III.19; also III.22–64; cf., for example, Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problemata* XVI.13.

⁴ Aetius, *Placita philosophorum* IV.13.9–10, in Diels H. – Kranz W., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: 1903¹) 28 A 48.

⁵ Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problemata* III.10 872 b.

⁶ *Apologia* 15; Apuleius of Madauros, *Pro se de magia (Apologia)*, ed. V. Hunink, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: 1997) 46–47.

ones being apprehended through the convexity of the encircled hand.⁷ Seeing with the eyes differed from touching with the hands only with respect to the perception of colours.⁸ The Stoics had already previously claimed that through the visual cone, one could see ‘in the same way in which one feels with a stick’.⁹ Galen criticises this comparison – not because he rejects the idea of physical contact, but rather because he considers the comparison too ‘wooden’.¹⁰ The error in the comparison lies in the fact that walking-sticks only communicate counterpressure to the hand, ‘whereas sight reaches out through the intervening air to the coloured body’, which ‘is seen in the place where it actually is’.¹¹ Galen explicitly makes no distinction here between the visual ray and other physical nerves. According to him, the ‘homogeneous part that forms one body with itself’, formed from *pneuma* and air, ‘becomes for us the kind of instrument that the nerve in the body is at all times’.¹² This means that the mixture of *pneuma* and air is for us a tool of perception of visible objects of the same type that the nerves are for palpable objects. What is obvious in the latter case must therefore also apply to the visual rays: sensation takes place in the individual parts and not in the soul, since ‘the pain would not be felt in the part of the body that is cut or crushed or burned if the power of sensation were not also present in the parts’.¹³

⁷ *Optics* II.67; Smith M.A., *Ptolemy's Theory of Visual Perception: An English Translation of the Optics with Introduction and Commentary* (Philadelphia: 1996) 99.

⁸ *Optics* II.13. The idea that vision takes place through touch is also assumed in numerous other places in Ptolemy's *Optics*; cf. II.20, III.8–12.19.22.64, etc.

⁹ *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora, De anima liber cum mantissa*, ed. I. Bruns (Berlin: 1960; reprint of ed. Berlin: 1887) 130; Plotinus, *Enneads* II.8 and IV.5.

¹⁰ *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* VII.5 and 7; *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, ed. P. De Lacy, vol. 2 (Berlin: 1987) 461, 475.

¹¹ *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* VII.5; ed. De Lacy, 461.

¹² *Ibid.*; ed. De Lacy, 455 and 461. Cf. Tideus, *De speculis*, in Björnbo A.A. – Vogl S., *Alkindi, Tideus und Pseudo-Euklid. Drei optische Werke* (Leipzig: 1912) 74; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae et sententiae philosophorum* VII.157.

¹³ *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* VII.7; ed. De Lacy, 473. In Plato, as well – according to whom we see as a result of the common radiation of the visual ray and the ray from the object (see in particular *Timaeus* 45a–d, as well as *Menon* 76d, *Theaetetus* 156d and *Sophist* 266e) – colour perception happens outside the body, although it does not take place at the location of the object. The particles radiating from bodies meet the visual ray and produce the perceptions of white or black depending on whether they dilute the ray or condense it.

Predominance and Survival of the Ancient Theory of Visual Rays

The only ancient theorist of vision who departs from this view, according to which vision is to be explained by contact through a physical ray between the eye and the object, in either one direction or the other, is Aristotle, in his psychological texts *De Anima* and *De Sensu* (while in other writings – particularly the third book of the *Meteorology* – he clearly assumes the existence of a visual ray).¹⁴ Instead, he claims that the process that triggers perception consists solely of a mediation of the colours of an object to the eye through the intervening medium. He is therefore closest to our modern conception of vision. However, this Aristotelian theory in particular remained without adherents, with the exception of a few of his pupils, throughout the ancient period and the early Middle Ages.¹⁵ The theory based on the reception of material doubles that emanate from the object also remained restricted – with few exceptions – to a single school, that of the Atomists. It was the theory of a ray emanating from the eye that continued to exercise the greatest influence and provided the framework for scientific and popular notions well beyond the period of antiquity.

The theory of the visual ray was passed to the Middle Ages through copies of Euclid's *Optics*,¹⁶ and in particular by a partial translation and commentary on Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* by Calcidius, the widespread distribution of which is attested to by an unusually large number of manuscripts.¹⁷ The predominance of a Platonising visual-ray theory among early Christian and medieval authors such as Augustine, William of Conches, Abelard of Bath and Robert Grosseteste is evidently owed to Calcidius.¹⁸ In the eighth and ninth centuries, for example, it was used in the iconoclastic dispute by the defenders of images in order

¹⁴ See in particular Simon G., *Le Regard* 42–52.

¹⁵ It was usually the passages in the Aristotelian canon in which Aristotle assumes the existence of a visual ray that were followed; this was already the case in Theophrastus, *De sensu et sensibilibus* 18, and *De vertigo* 8.

¹⁶ Theisen W.R., *The Mediaeval Tradition of Euclid's Optics* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin: 1972).

¹⁷ Chalcidius 236–237 – *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*, ed. J.H. Waszink (London: 1975) 248f.

¹⁸ See in particular Schleusener-Eichholz G., *Das Auge im Mittelalter*, vol. 1 (Munich: 1985) 51–136; Lindberg D.C., *Theories of Vision*, 87–103. The atomistic theory of vision was also sometimes maintained, e.g. by Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum homiliae* IV.1,15, VII.4,1, XIII.5,12.

to prove the superiority of vision to hearing.¹⁹ For example, Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople – in a sermon given in 867 in the Hagia Sophia on the occasion of the solemn consecration of the first large mosaic after more than a century of disputes over the legitimacy of images – stated that visual rays are emitted by the eye, extend as far as the viewed object, touch it, and return with the information they have obtained to the eye again; penetrating the eye, the rays then pass to the brain, where the information is visualised in order finally to be passed on to memory. The latter stages of the process are the same as with hearing, but the information communicated by vision is much greater, as the visual rays touch the object.²⁰

It was only around 1000 AD that serious competition for the theory arose among the Arabian Aristotelians.²¹ Although Al-Kindi was still a defender of the visual-ray theory, Alhazen, Avicenna and others for the first time worked on the assumption that light rays are received by a light-sensitive organ in the eye – although they considered that the crystalline lens was the organ concerned. Towards the end of the 12th century, and particularly in the 13th century, Arabian optics reached the European area. Authors such as Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, John Peckham and Witelo adopted the Aristotelian-Arabian theory, but were nevertheless never able to free themselves completely from the authority of their own earlier tradition, which assumed the existence of a visual ray. In addition, a need to preserve the subject as having an active part (voluntary and thus responsible before God) in perception may also have played a role. Roger Bacon, for example, proposes a compromise according to which the visual ray prepares the air for the ‘species’ flowing out from the object.²² In addition, the idea that vision takes place solely through a visual ray emanating from the eye continues to be held; particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries, examples illustrating

¹⁹ See Nelson R.S., ‘To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium’, *idem* (ed.), *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge: 2000) 143–168, esp. 150–155.

²⁰ Mango C., *The Homilies of Photios of Constantinople* (Cambridge, MA: 1958) 294. Similarly, Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis (*De consecratione* 9), in the first half of the 12th century, who used the visual-ray theory to explain the shining mosaics of the old church of Saint Denis: the eye sends out rays that meet the objects, return from them to the eyes and are borne into the soul by the visual ray; if the old church had been larger, the mosaics would therefore have lost their effect.

²¹ Lindberg D.C., *Theories of Vision*, 33–86.

²² Lindberg D.C., *Theories of Vision*, 107–116.

this view increase rather than decrease in number.²³ And even after a theory of vision corresponding to today's ideas had prevailed in the natural sciences with the introduction of Kepler's retinal image theory around 1600, the visual-ray theory continues to appear, is debated as a possible alternative, and even energetically defended.²⁴ This was true in any case in the broader field of optical physiognomy and optical magic (the evil eye, the loving gaze, the deadly gaze, the basilisk's eye, the transmission of diseases via the gaze, etc.); these phenomena are easiest to explain with a material conception of visual rays.²⁵ What we nowadays dismiss as misconceptions or superstition appears here to be simply the obverse side of (pseudo-) science. A 'history of the palpable gaze' based on this approach would therefore be a desideratum for further research.

In what follows here, only one example can be selected from this long history of the survival of the ancient theory of the visual ray and its conception of the existence of a material gaze: its Neo-Platonic adaptation in the philosophy of Marsilio Ficino and in Michelangelo's poetry. Surprisingly, in examining the topic we also encounter elements of the atomistic theory of vision.

²³ This can probably be traced back to the Neo-Platonic tradition, particularly the numerous attempts to provide natural scientific explanations for 'white magic'. Marsilio Ficino and Michelangelo are discussed below. Cf. the literature cited in notes 25 and 44.

²⁴ In the 17th century by Agrippa of Nettesheim, *De occulta philosophia* I.65, for example, or Browne T., *Works*, ed. S. Wilkins, vol. 2 (London: 1835) 416–419; in the 18th century (1787) by Valletta N., *Ciccalata sul Fascino*, chapter 22, for example; even in 1910, A. Freybe explains the evil eye by material 'effluvia', in *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube* (Gotha: 1910) 115. See the bibliographical references in the following notes; cf. also Weisrock K., *Götterblick und Zaubermacht. Auge, Blick und Wahrnehmung in Aufklärung und Romantik* (Opladen: 1990).

²⁵ On the gaze of love, most recently Kliemann J., 'Kunst als Bogenschießen. Domenichinos "Jagd der Diana" in der Galleria Borghese', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 31 (1996) 299–309; Suzuki S., "'Through my heart her eyes' beamy darts be gone": The Power of Seeing in Renaissance Poems and Emblems of Love', in Harms W. – Peil D. (eds.), *Polyvalenz und Multifunktionalität der Emblematik – Multivalence and Multifunctionality of the Emblem. Akten des 5. Internat. Kongresses der Society for Emblem Studies*, part II (Frankfurt am Main: 2002) 725–734. On the evil eye and related topics: Seligmann S., *Die Zauberkräft des Auges und das Berufen* (Hamburg: 1921) esp. 458–529; Maloney C. (ed.), *The Evil Eye* (New York: 1976); Stasi L. Di, *Mal Occhio: The Underside of Vision* (San Francisco: 1981); Hauschild T., *Der böse Blick. Ideengeschichtliche und soziologische Untersuchungen*, 2nd rev. ed. (1982); Siebers T., *The Mirror of Medusa* (Berkeley: 1983).

From Plato to Neo-Platonism

Initially, however, the transition from Platonism to Neo-Platonism needs to be characterised. In view of the brevity required for this discussion and the topic concerned, we may start with what is known as Plato's sun metaphor (*Republic* VI, 508a–509d). This is introduced by a question concerning which organ it is that allows visible things to be seen (507c). This is the visual ray.²⁶ It is thought of as being superior to all other senses, since the demiurge created it as the most valuable sense.²⁷ In the subsequent argument, what might appear to us to be a deficiency is interpreted by Plato as a privilege: while the ear during the process of perception is immediately dependent only on the acoustic signal, the visual ray requires a mediating instance in order that an object can be perceived. To Glaucon's question of what this third element might be that originally makes vision possible, Socrates gives the simple answer: 'The thing [...] that you call light' (507e). This is followed by the actual metaphor. The metaphor explains that the Good, as the highest idea, is – 'in the intelligible region to reason and the objects of reason' – that which the sun is 'in the visible world to vision and the objects of vision' (508b–c). To clarify this, Socrates points to the familiar experience that in moonlight, objects lose their colours and sharp contours, and he then compares vision in sunlight to the contemplation of existence by reason, and vision in moonlight to the contemplation of the objects in the transitory world by the senses.²⁸ The comparison is admittedly a lame one: while the difference in quality in sensory vision is due to differing light conditions, in the case of mental apprehension it is the result of differing objects.²⁹ The eye may be privileged among the senses,

²⁶ The term *ὄψις* in Plato and his contemporaries can mean vision (the fact of seeing), the visual ray or gaze, as well as a sight that one receives of a thing (its appearance), or the viewed object itself, but never the eye. If, as in this case, the organ, the instrument of seeing is mentioned, then it can only be translated as visual ray (or gaze) in accordance with the Platonic theory of vision (see in particular *Timaeus* 45a–d, as well as *Menon* 76d, *Theaetetus* 156d and *Sophist* 266e).

²⁷ Cf. *Timaeus* 47a–c and *Phaedrus* 250c–d.

²⁸ When the soul is 'firmly fixed on the domain where truth and reality shine resplendent, it apprehends and knows them and appears to possess reason; but when it inclines to that region which is mingled with darkness, the world of becoming and passing away, it opines only and its edge is blunted, and it shifts its opinions hither and thither, and again seems as if it lacked reason' (508d).

²⁹ With regard to the damaging effect, however, the metaphor works again: the false light damages vision and ruins the eyes; the false objects weaken the power of thought and ruin reason.

but it is in no way capable of perceiving the Good/Beautiful, or any other ideas. These can only be recognised by the *nous*, the inner eye, the eye of the mind. And this means – to depart from the language of analogy – that the field of the ideal sphere can only be thought of, and is incapable of being seen. The comparison introduced in the sun metaphor, between nonsensory and sensory recognition, thus serves on the one hand to clarify the conditions of recognition, but at the same time to contrast two organs of recognition – because the physical eye and the mental eye are assigned to two strictly distinct types of object, the *mundus sensibilis* and the *mundus intelligibilis*.³⁰

However, the mental and physical eye must be distinguished not only from each other; the former also needs to be protected from the latter. Plato mentions the ‘visual ray of the soul’, which is said to be directed toward the Good (the Ideas), but which is dragged downward by the leaden weights of sensuality (*Republic* VII, 519a–b). These leaden weights of sensuality also include objects considered by many to be ‘beautiful’, which are always contrasted in the Platonic dialogues – particularly *Hippias Major* – with the idea of the Beautiful. The idea of the Good is also repeatedly described as being ‘beautiful’ (or ‘fair’) – for example, in Book 6 of the *Republic* (508e–509a), where it is stated that truth and knowledge are both ‘beautiful’, but that their beauty is surpassed by the ‘inconceivable beauty’ of that which creates not only the recognisability of existence, but existence itself. Here, as elsewhere, the beautiful is in no sense aesthetic, but instead has purely ontological and epistemological connotations – ontological, to the extent that the word indicates an optimum of being and that which appears in the greatest fullness of being; epistemological, to the extent that truth and knowledge are equated with beauty and described as beautiful; that ‘that which entirely *is* is entirely knowable’ (*Republic* V, 477a).³¹

³⁰ The Platonic dialogues generally observe this distinction, particularly in the metaphor of the line (509d–511e) and metaphor of the cave (514a–517a), which follow the sun metaphor.

³¹ This also ultimately applies to *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. What is stated there should not be confused with the Neo-Platonic version of it. Cf. Taureck B., ‘Mythos und Paideia. Ein Beitrag zu einem anderen philosophischen Verständnis des Schönen bei Platon’, in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie* 14 (1981) 123–134.

Ficino's Cycle of Love

In Marsilio Ficino – following preparatory developments in the tradition during late antiquity and in the Middle Ages³² – (1) the idea of the Good has become God, who (2) ‘expresses’ Himself in beauty, which (3) in the form of a ray of light or a glory of light (4) penetrates the fourfold divisions of the cosmos and (5) appears and is visible at corresponding degrees of intensity in each of these divisions, although (6) in a special way in Man; (7), it is no longer the philosopher’s mental eye but the physical eye of the lover that plays the decisive role in the path to knowledge and salvation.³³

Ficino conceives of God as a foundation of beauty who flows, out of love, through His creation and sustains it. God himself is infinite, pure – i.e., free of materiality – absolute goodness (*bonitas*), which ‘expresses’ itself in beauty (*pulchritudo*). With the help of a metaphor of light, this process is captured in the image of a ray that emerges from the sun, but without losing any of the substance of the sun.³⁴ This divine ray of light (*splendor*) penetrates every level of the universe (*mens, anima, natura, materia*), where it is refracted (reflected) in order finally to express itself on the last level, that of matter, in forms. It is also said of this divine beauty that it attracts all levels of the universe (including above all the level of the ‘middle’, that of Man) and that through this path of attraction (*amor*) it leads back to its starting-point, God (*voluptas*).³⁵

The Good is certainly said to be that supereminent existence itself of God. Beauty is a certain act or ray from it penetrating through all things: first into the Angelic Mind, second into the Soul of the whole, and the other souls, third into Nature, fourth into the Matter of bodies. It adorns the Mind with the order of the Ideas. It fills the Soul with the series of the Reasons. It supports Nature with the Seeds. It ornaments Matter with Forms. But just as a single ray of the sun lights up four bodies, fire, air, water, and earth, so a single ray of God illuminates the Mind, the Soul, Nature, and Matter. And just as anyone who sees the light in those four elements is looking at a ray of the sun itself and through that ray is

³² See for example Plotinus, *Enneads* II.8 and V.5.7.

³³ The Platonic sun metaphor itself is also reinterpreted by Ficino in this sense: Ficino M., *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis sive De amore* II.2 and VI.13 (hereafter *De amore*).

³⁴ See in particular *De amore* II.2.5–6.9; V.4.6.11; VI.7.9–10.17–19; VII.1. Similar views following Ficino are found for example in Castiglione B., *Il libro del Cortegiano* IV.68 (Venice: 1528).

³⁵ See in particular *De amore* II.2; II.5; V.4; VI.10; VII.14.

turned to looking at the supreme light of the sun, so anyone who looks at and loves the beauty in those four, Mind, Soul, Nature, and Body, is looking at and loving the splendour of God in them, and, through this splendour, God Himself.³⁶

In none of these media, however, does divine beauty become more clearly visible than in Man. As the essence of God itself has been defined as an emergence of the *unum bonum* in the form of the divine ray described as *pulchritudo*, Man, suffused with the divine ray, is now also regarded from the point of view of this interrelationship, according to which the harmony of the virtues within him, the goodness of the soul, expresses itself in the beauty of external appearance.³⁷ One who sees this physical beauty and recognises its essence (which is only possible if his own soul corresponds to this essence) can be led upward to know and to delight in God.

Material Gazes and Bloody Mirrors

The eyes play an extremely important part in this process, in two ways. Firstly, the eye is the only organ capable of receiving and perceiving divine beauty.³⁸ Secondly, the eye is the primary location in which this ray of divine beauty lights up and becomes visible, and the place from which this ray of divine light is most intensively sent forth.³⁹ The eyes of the beloved, on the one hand, and those of the lover on the other, are thus the means by which the cycle described is closed:

The ray of beauty... has the power to be reflected back to what it came from, and it draws the lover with it. But it descends first from God, and passes through the Angel and the World-Soul as if they were made of glass; and from the Soul it easily emanates into the body prepared to receive it. Then from that body of a younger man it shines out, especially through the eyes, the transparent windows of the soul. It flies onward,

³⁶ *De amore* II.5; this and the following quotations are taken from Ficino M., *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. J. Sears (Dallas: 1985); for Ficino's Latin text, see Ficino M., *Über die Liebe oder Platons Gastmahl* [Latin and German], trans K.P. Hasse, ed. P.R. Blum (Hamburg: 1994).

³⁷ See in particular *De amore* VI.1 and VI.2.

³⁸ *De amore* II.9: 'Not the ears, not smell, not taste, not touch, but the eye perceives that light of the body – its beauty. If the eye alone recognises, it alone enjoys. Therefore the eye alone enjoys the beauty of the body.'

³⁹ See in particular *De amore* VI.9–10 and VII.1.

through the air, and penetrating the eye of the other, pierces his soul, kindles his desire, then leads the wounded soul and the kindled appetite to their healing and cooling, respectively, while it carries them with it to the same place from which it had itself descended, step-by-step indeed, first to the body of the beloved, second, to the Soul, third, to the Angel, and finally to God, the first origin of this splendour.⁴⁰

The basis for this idea is the ancient conception of a visual ray emanating from the eye and its nature as light in general or the Platonic conception in particular. In *Phaedrus*, Plato himself explains the events that take place in love and compares them to a disease of the eye.⁴¹ The fact that Ficino regarded this transfer as being an actual physical one, in the same way that the ancient sources assume, is seen even more clearly when, after the discussion of true love – the real topic of *De Amore* – he concludes by warning against the inferior version of it. In love that is called forth by divine beauty, only the ray of light from God, or the beauty of God, is mentioned as that which is transferred by the gaze; by contrast, when common, sensual love and the way in which it arises are discussed, the text refers to the transference of blood distilled into living spirits, which in the person gazed on in this way triggers a feverish, sick love for the one who gazes.⁴² Once these spirits have penetrated through the eyes into the body of the one being looked at, they pass directly to the heart, where they condense once again into blood and cause damage. Due to the materiality of the visual ray, this

⁴⁰ *De amore* VI.10. To the importance of the eyes as the medium for the divine ray of light, Ficino in several passages adds an identification of the face or the eyes of God as their source. See V.5 (*'Pulchritudo est splendor divini vultus'*); V.4; *Theologia Platonica* XVI.I *passim*: God 'sees' with his light 'around the circle'. This identification is also found in Michelangelo; see, for example, poem no. 117: 'my soul by its very nature rests on her who resembles in her eyes those eyes from which it first came forth'. For the reference, see note 50 below.

⁴¹ *Phaedrus* 255c–d: '[...] then at last the flowing stream [...] pours down on the lover (who is inspired by god) in such great quantities that while some of it sinks into him, the rest flows off outside as he fills up and brims over. Just as a gust of wind or an echo rebounds from smooth, hard objects and returns to where it came from, so the flow of beauty returns into the beautiful boy through his eyes, which is its natural route into the soul, and then arrives and excites him, it irrigates his wings' channels and makes his plumage start to grow, and fills the soul of the beloved in his turn with love. So he is in love, but he has no idea what he is in love with. He does not know what has happened to him and he cannot explain it. It is as if he has caught an inflammation of the eye from someone else and cannot say where it came from' (trans. R. Waterfield, Oxford: 2002). Cf. Ficino's disciple Diacceto F.C. da, *Panegirico all'amore* (Florence: 1526); Frommel C.L., *Michelangelo und Tommaso dei Cavalieri* (Amsterdam: 1979) 107f.

⁴² *De amore* VII.4–10; cf. VI.6.

transference takes place involuntarily and inevitably; it depends only on the quality of the blood vapour transferred and thus requires neither beauty nor spiritual affinity, and can only lead to physical love. As in Plutarch,⁴³ whom Ficino may be recalling here, the loving gaze thus acquires clear similarities to the evil eye:

For since these (the spirits) are generated from the purer blood by the heat of the heart, they are always the same in us as the humour of the blood. But, just as this vapour of the spirits is produced from the blood, so also it itself sends out rays like itself through the eyes, which are like glass windows. And also just as the heart of the world, the sun, from its circuit sends down light, and through the light sends down its own powers to lower things, so the heart of our body, through a certain perpetual motion of its own, stirring the blood nearest to it, spreads sparks of lights through the eyes. Certainly the spirit, since it is very light, flies out most to the highest parts of the body, and its light shines out more copiously through the eyes since they themselves are transparent and the most shining of all the parts [...] But the fact that a ray which is sent out by the eyes draws with it a spiritual vapour, and that this vapour draws with it blood, we observe from this, that bleary and red eyes, by the emission of their own ray, force the eyes of a beholder nearby to be afflicted with a similar disease. This shows that the ray extends as far as that person opposite, and that along with the ray emanates a vapour of corrupt blood, by the contagion of which the eye of the observer is infected [...] Therefore, what wonder is it if the eye, wide open and fixed upon someone, shoots the darts of its own rays into the eyes of the bystander, and along with those darts, which are the vehicles of the spirits, aims that sanguine vapour which we call spirit? Hence the poisoned dart pierces through the eyes, and since it is shot from the heart of the shooter, it seeks again the heart of the man being shot, as its proper home; it wounds the heart, but in the heart's hard back wall it is blunted and turns back into blood. This foreign blood, being somewhat foreign to the nature of the wounded man, infects his blood. The infected blood becomes sick.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Quaestiones convivales* V.7; cf. I.8.

⁴⁴ *De amore* VII.4. Cf., for example, Castiglione B., *Cortegiano* IV.66. On the doctrine of spirits in general: Couliano I.P., *Eros e magia nel Rinascimento: La congiunzione astrologica del 1484* (Milan: 1987) 52–57; Klein R., “‘Spirito Peregrino’: Der Gedanke als pilgernder Geist”, in idem, *Gestalt und Gedanke. Zur Kunst und Theorie der Renaissance* (Berlin: 1996) 15–49; also Fehrenbach F., ‘Colpi vitali. Berninis Beseelungen’, in Suthor N. – Fischer-Lichte E. (eds.), *Verklärte Körper. Ästhetiken der Transfiguration* (Munich: 2006) 104–109. On Ficino's transformation of this tradition, most recently: Ebbersmeyer S., ‘Die Blicke der Liebenden. Zur Theorie, Magie und Metaphorik des Sehens in *De amore* von Marsilio Ficino’, in Borsche T. et al. (eds.), *Blick und Bild im Spannungsfeld von Sehen, Metaphern und Verstehen* (Munich: 1998) 197–211.

Ficino reverts here to earlier arguments that are used in the context of the ancient visual-ray theory to demonstrate that the nature of the visual ray is that of light: the fact that numerous animals can see by night and that their eyes glow;⁴⁵ the fact that when one presses one's own eye in a certain way, one can see a glow;⁴⁶ that the eyes of Augustus were bright and shining to such an extent that everyone had to divert his own gaze from him as if from a ray of sunlight, and that the Emperor Tiberius had eyes that were so large that he was also able to see by night.⁴⁷ To prove that the gaze contained blood, Ficino refers to the opinion expressed by Aristotle 'that women, when the menstrual blood flows down, often soil a mirror with bloody drops by their own gaze'.⁴⁸

It is thus clearly articulated that the gaze consists of light *and* is material in nature. However, the precise composition of this visual ray is far from being clear, and not only in this passage. Initially, it is said that the visual ray is of the nature of light to the extent that the spirit produced from the blood that is radiated from the eyes is also of the nature of light. Just as the sun transfers warmth and vital energy through its light rays, so the heart, by moving the blood, radiates from the eyes in light-like, but still blood-containing, living spirits. Later, however, it is said that the 'spiritual vapour' is not identical with the visual ray ('a ray which is sent out by the eyes'), but is only co-transported along with it. This visual ray can thus only be the ray of sight in the (ancient) theory of vision, to which the authorities cited in this connection also refer.

With regard to divine love, this means firstly that in the transference of or infection with divine love, the divine ray of light becomes mixed with the constantly emanating light-like ray of sight; and secondly that even in the case of this combined light ray, blood is transported – but it is no longer corruptible blood, but rather (in accordance with the

⁴⁵ See, among other sources, Empedocles in Diels H. – Kranz W. (eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: 1903¹), 68 A 157; Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* I.8.4; Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhoniae institutiones* I.14.45; Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.5.7; Pliny, *Naturalis historia* II.55.

⁴⁶ See, among other sources, Aristotle, *De sensu* 437a; Theophrastus, *De sensu et sensibilibus* 26; Plotinus, *Enneads* IV.5.7.

⁴⁷ See Damianos, *Optics* 2; Suetonius, *Vitae Caesarum* III.68 and II.79; Pliny, *Naturalis historia* XI.54; Dio Cassius, *Historia romana* 57.2.

⁴⁸ *De insomniis* II.459b–460a; cf. Kodera S., 'Narcissus, Divine Gazes and Bloody Mirrors: the Concept of Matter in Ficino', in Allen M.J.B. et al. (eds.), *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden: 2002) 303f.

principle that only a virtuous person is capable of accepting and passing on the divine ray of light) good blood, which is supposedly further ennobled through the passage of the divine light. As these can hardly be two different gazes, it can only be a matter of two different qualities of one and the same gaze here.

Michelangelo's Eyes

Turning to Michelangelo, we find in his poetry several of the elements of a Neo-Platonic theory of love that has a Ficinian quality – God, who ‘expresses’ himself in beauty, which suffuses the stages of the cosmos as a ray of light, becomes particularly visible in Man and thus gives rise to a movement of attraction, i.e. love, which leads back to God; the outstanding significance of the eyes, the visual ray, the description of love as a sickness. Although the poet does not adopt the doctrine of the blood-spirit, the correspondences are so strong that they cannot be explained by the poetic tradition preceding Michelangelo alone, but only through his knowledge of the teachings of his contemporary Ficino, whom he knew personally.⁴⁹

A clear example of this dependence is seen in poem no. 107:⁵⁰

My eyes, eager for beautiful things,
and my soul no less for its salvation,
have no other means
by which they may ascend to heaven
than to gaze on all such (beautiful) things.

From the highest stars
descends a splendour
which draws our desire to them:
and this we here call love.

⁴⁹ On Ficino's influence on Michelangelo, most recently Hub B., ‘“...e fa dolce la morte”: Love, Death, and Salvation in Michelangelo's Last Judgment’, in *Artibus et Historiae* 51 (2005) 103–130.

⁵⁰ Quotations from Michelangelo's poems are based on the critical Italian edition by Girardi E.N., *Michelangelo Buonarroti. Rime* (Bari: 1960). The English translation is from the modern prose version by Ryan C., *Michelangelo: The Poems* (London: 1996), with minor changes.

The noble heart has nothing else
that can make it love and burn, nothing else to guide it,
than a face which in its eyes resembles those stars.⁵¹

Like Ficino, Michelangelo also regards visible beauty as a reflex of the ray of light emanating from God (*splendore*).⁵² But the entire movement of the poem can also be seen to be modelled on Ficino, if the relation between God and the world is seen as a dynamic relationship of attraction that is initiated by God, passes through the cosmos, and flows back into God. And as in Ficino, the concept of *amore* in Michelangelo also does not serve to describe a subjective feeling, but to describe an objective power that presents itself to human beings and challenges them, an objective power of attraction that is triggered by the ray of God's light expressing itself in beauty. However, what links Michelangelo's poem most strongly with Ficino's philosophy of love is the outstanding and dual role ascribed to the eyes in this circle: on the one hand, they are the primary instrument for experiencing beauty; on the other, they are also the primary site for the appearance of the divine ray – the point of crystallisation of divine beauty.⁵³

The very first line mentions the eyes as striving for beautiful things. Both the eyes and the soul are then said to have no other means of raising themselves to Heaven than by gazing on all of these beautiful

⁵¹ *Gli occhi mie vaghi delle cose belle
e l'alma insieme della suo salute
non hanno altra virtute
c'ascenda al ciel, che mirar tutte quelle.
Dalle più alte stelle
discende uno splendore
che 'l desir tira a quelle,
e qui si chiama amore.
Nè altro ha il gentil core
che l'innamori e arda, e che 'l consigli,
c'un volto che negli occhi lor somigli.*

⁵² *De amore* II.9: 'Beauty is a splendour drawing the human soul to it'; for further passages, see note 34 above. The topic of the divine ray is also adapted in many different ways by Michelangelo (see details given in the following note), particularly in poem no. 258: 'your beautiful human face shows forth the divine beauty here [...] your splendour [...] there is nothing else to draw my mind to heaven'; in poems 34 and 100, the beloved person himself is described as 'light and splendour' or 'living ray'. Cf. Castiglione B., *Cortegiano* IV.52.62.

⁵³ In addition to the poems cited below, see also nos. 28, 30, 38, 40, 54, 75, 76, 78, 81, 87, 89, 95, 100, 113, 163 and 258.

things. However, they only find their goal, their counterpart, in the human face – which is the bearer or transitional point for divine light. In a final step, this face is then narrowed down by Michelangelo to the eyes alone; however, these in turn are narrowed down to a specific quality, which is described in the briefest possible way as *lor somigli*, which can only refer to *le più alte stelle*, describing the nature and source of the radiance shining in the eyes of the beloved person. This divine light attracts the soul to it and leads it back to its origin. The repeated mention of the eyes in the last line also seals a conceptual ring round the poem, again emphasising the dual role of the eyes at the formal level.

Numerous other poems show that, according to Michelangelo, this ray of light appears not only in the eyes of the beloved person but is also radiated by them and penetrates into one's own eyes. Poem no. 30 may serve as an example:

From the eyes of the one who is my good
there issues a swift, burning ray of light so bright
that it passes to my heart through my eyes, even when closed.
Thus Love limps along,
so unequal is the burden he bears,
bringing to me light, and taking from me darkness.⁵⁴

The ray of God's light (divine beauty), which is reflected in virtuous persons and expresses itself in a beautiful body, emanates from the eyes or is radiated by them and penetrates through the eyes of the one who is gazed on in this way, entering his heart, in this way giving rise to 'love'.

From the Physical to the Spiritual Eye

In another group of poems, a significant change or extension of what has been discussed so far occurs. Poem no. 166, for example, reads:

⁵⁴ *Dagli occhi del mie ben si parte e vola
Un raggio ardente e di sì chiara luce
Che da' mie, chiusi ancor, trapassa 'l core.
Onde va zoppo Amore,
tant'è dispar la soma che conduce,
dando a me luce, e tenebre m'invola.*

My eyes can certainly see near or far
 where your beautiful face appears;
 but it is certainly beyond the power of my feet
 to carry my arms and hands to where my eyes can reach.

The soul, the whole and healthy intellect,
 more free and unbound ascends by means of the eyes
 to your high beauty; but burning ardour
 gives no such privilege to the human body,
 the human body, heavy and mortal,
 so that, still lacking wings, it cannot follow the flight of an angel,
 it is sight alone that may pride itself in doing so.

If you have as much power in heaven as you have among us,
 make of my entire body a single eye;
 may there then be no part of me which does not rejoice in you.⁵⁵

In good Ficinian fashion, the poem contrasts two paths to beauty, of which the path of touch, which is identified with the body as such, is declared to be unsuitable, while the path of vision, which is identified with the eyes alone, is described as having the exclusive right and capacity to grasp beauty.⁵⁶ It is through the eyes alone that the soul is capable of ascending to God. In words very similar to those used by Ficino to describe it, Michelangelo therefore wishes to completely suppress the body and become entirely an eye (*make of my entire body a single eye*).⁵⁷ As in Ficino, the totality of vision in Michelangelo also corresponds to a totality of joy (*may there then be no part of me which does not rejoice in you*).

⁵⁵ *Ben posson gli occhi mie presso e lontano
 veder dov' apparisce il tuo bel volto;
 ma dove loro, ai pie', donna, è ben tolto
 portar le braccia e l'una e l'altro mano.
 L'anima, l'intelletto intero e sano
 per gli occhi ascende più libero e sciolto
 a l'alta tuo beltà; ma l'ardor molto
 non dà tal privilegio al corp' umano
 grave e mortal, sì che mal segue poi,
 senz'ali ancor, d'un' angioletta il volo,
 e 'l veder sol pur se ne gloria e loda.
 Deh, se tu puo' nel ciel quante tra noi,
 fa' del mie corpo tutto un occhio solo;
 né fie poi parte in me che non ti goda.*

⁵⁶ See in particular *De amore* I.3; II.9; V.2; VI.10.

⁵⁷ *Theologia Platonica* I.VI.5.

At the same time, there is a dual extension of vision here. On the part of the perceiving subject, the external, physical eye is now explicitly linked with the inner, nonphysical eye, the soul, which in a second step is further specified as the intellect, as the part of the soul that alone has the ability to receive and recognise the radiance of divine beauty. This extension of recognition from physical to spiritual seeing is matched by an extension of the object of recognition, since the physical beauty of the beloved person is now explicitly transcended. The actual goal of the recognition is not the reflexion of divine beauty, but rather the beauty itself, or God himself. As the sequence *a l'alta tuo beltà* – departing from the more usual phrase *alla tua alta beltà* – shows above all, *alta* is not an adjective here, but rather a locative adverb. It is no longer a matter here of the beauty of the beloved person, but rather of her heavenly beauty itself, which stands above her and her body, and even in her eyes is only visible in a refracted form. Accordingly, the eyes, which were previously the actual conveyers of recognition, now become the medium (*per gli occhi*) used by the soul or the intellect, the inner eye – although admittedly this inner eye is unable to dispense with the outer one.⁵⁸

Outer Likeness and Inner Original

Although Michelangelo in the preceding poem still describes the highest stage of love in a fashion reminiscent of the traditional terminology as *alta beltà*, in poem no. 105 he speaks – very closely influenced by Ficino⁵⁹ here – of the *forma universale* as the ultimate goal of love:

It was not something mortal my eyes saw
when in your beautiful eyes I found complete peace;

⁵⁸ The continuing necessity for the physical presence of the beloved person is emphasised, for example, in nos. 44, 81, 258 and fragment 28; cf. Ficino M., *De Amore* VI.6: 'The eye and the spirit, which, like mirrors, can receive images of a body only in its presence, and lose them when it is absent, need the continuous presence of a beautiful body in order to shine continuously with its illumination, and be comforted and pleased. Therefore, on account of their poverty, the eye and the spirit require the presence of the body, and the soul, which is usually dominated by them, is forced to desire the same thing.'

⁵⁹ *De amore* VI.6: '*universales rerum ideae*'; cf. Castiglione B., *Cortegiano* IV.67: '*concetto universale*'.

rather, they saw within, where all evil displeases,
 him, God, who assails with love my soul, which is similar to himself;
 if my soul had not been created by God equal to himself,
 then indeed it would wish for nothing more than external beauty,
 which pleases the eyes; but because external beauty is frail and mortal,
 the soul rises above to beauty's universal form.⁶⁰

The Platonic and Neo-Platonic conceptions of preexistence and anamnesis are also likely to have been communicated to Michelangelo by Ficino.⁶¹ These are expressed in poem no. 34, for example:

In separating the soul from God,
 Love made me a healthy eye and you light and splendor;
 and so my great desire cannot but see God
 in that part of you which, to our misfortune, dies.

Like heat from fire, can no more be separated
 my esteem from the eternal beauty;
 it exalts whoever most resembles him (God) from whom it comes.

Since in your eyes you have paradise entire,
 in order to return to where I first loved you,
 I hasten burning back under your eyebrows.⁶²

⁶⁰ *Non vider gli occhi miei cosa mortale
 allor che ne' bei vostri intera pace
 trovai, ma dentro, ov' ogni mal dispiace,
 ch' d'amor l'alma a sè simil m'assale;
 e se creata a dio non fusse eguale,
 altro che 'l bel di fuor, c'agli occhi piace,
 più non vorria; ma perch' è sì fallace,
 trascende nella forma universale.*

⁶¹ See in particular *De amore* V.5 ('If the image of the external man received through the senses and passing into the soul disagrees with the figure of Man which the soul possesses, it instantaneously displeases and is regarded with hate as being ugly. If it agrees, it immediately pleases, and is loved as being beautiful.');

VI.6; VI.8; VI.13; VI.18–19; VII.1; cf. also V.3 and VI.7.

⁶² *Amor nel dipartir l'alma da Dio
 me fe' san occhio e te luc' e splendore;
 né può non rivederlo in quel que more
 di te, per nostro mal, mie gran desio
 Come dal foco el caldo, esser diviso
 non può dal bell'eterno ogni mie stima,
 ch'exalta, ond'ella vien, ch' più l somiglia.
 Poi negli occhi ha' tutto 'l paradiso,
 per ritornar là dov' i' t'ama' prima,
 ricorro ardendo sott'alle tuo ciglia.*

Cf. in particular poem no. 161.

But what precisely happens on the part of the lover in the moment in which the beauty seen here meets with the beauty preserved in the soul, the beauty viewed in preexistence? What is their relationship to each other?

In poem no. 42, Michelangelo casts this problem in the form of the following question:

Tell me in your kindness, Love, if my eyes
do really see the beauty that I long for;
or whether this is rather within me, since, wherever I gaze,
I see as if sculpted that woman's face.

To which the God of Love gives him the following answer:

The beauty that you see does indeed come from her (that true beauty
you long for),
but this beauty grows, since it ascends to a better place
when through mortal eyes it passes on to the soul.

There it becomes divine, virtuous and beautiful,
since any immortal thing wishes other things similarly immortal:
It is this divine beauty, and not the other, which existed before your eyes
came into being.⁶³

Michelangelo asks Love – i.e., God – whether the beauty he is contemplating in his beloved's face is the true beauty, the highest eternal beauty to which he aspires. God replies that beauty seen through the eye is indeed true divine beauty, but in a reflected and thus impure state (weakened, since reflected in mortal material); but that when it passes through the eye to the soul, it is transformed and becomes purer and absolute again. It is this transfigured beauty, 'beauty's universal form', God's beauty itself that constitutes the lover's real attraction and motiva-

⁶³ *Dimmi di grazia, Amor, se gli occhi mei
veggono 'l ver della beltà c' aspiro,
o s' io l' ho dentro allor che, dov' io miro,
veggio scolpito el viso di costei.
La beltà che tu vedi è ben da quella,
ma cresce poi c' a miglior loco sale,
se per gli occhi mortali all' alma corre.
Quivi si fa divina, onesta e bella,
com' a sé simil vuol cosa immortale:
questa e non quella agli occhi tuo precorre.*

tion. After the earthly image has been re-transformed into the heavenly one (and not before), the soul may ascend to its original source.⁶⁴

This conversion of the outer into an inner vision is again described in poem no. 44.⁶⁵

While I draw my soul, which sees through the eyes,
closer to the beauty that I first saw (before birth),
the image within it grows, and the other recedes.
As though unworthy and without any value.⁶⁶

The outward image passes from the outer to the inner eye, where an inner image grows closer to the innate 'beauty's universal form', invalidating entirely its former self. The sensual image is transmuted into an inner image by being compared with and brought closer to the archetype seen in pre-existence and stored within the soul at its creation.

Gaze and Image

While there was a variation between eye and face, between the light ray of divine beauty and physical beauty in the poems quoted previously, there is now explicit mention of images – images of the beautiful body of the beloved person, which can penetrate through the eye into the soul and 'grow' there by being compared with the original image, viewed in preexistence and preserved in the soul, and then assimilated to it. The relationship between the light ray that emanates from one person's eyes and penetrates the eyes of the person being gazed on, on the one hand; and the penetration of the images of the body seen by the person gazed on in this way, from the eyes of which the divine ray of light reaches him, on the other – Michelangelo does not explain this relationship anywhere. However, the relationship can only be understood in two ways. Either the divine ray of light prepares the soul to accept and recognise the images, or it initiates the development of images that

⁶⁴ Cf. no. 106, where – in contrast to no. 42 – the '*intelletto sano*' is not the already established element with which divine beauty of the beloved person is grasped, but rather divine beauty is precisely that which makes the '*intelletto*' 'healthy' and thus prepares for knowledge of itself.

⁶⁵ Cf., for example, nos. 38, 49, 54 and 112.

⁶⁶ *Mentre c'alla beltà ch'ì vidi in prima
appresso l'alma, che per gli occhi vede,
l'immagine dentro cresce, e quella cede
quasi vilmente e senza alcuna stima.*

have already penetrated or are penetrating simultaneously. A passage in the long poem no. 54 suggests that Michelangelo understood the relationship in the latter sense:

You entered me through my eyes (which make me dissolve in tears)
as a bunch of grapes goes into a bottle,
spreading out below the neck where the phial is wider;
your image (which outside makes me wet with tears) does likewise:
after passing through my eyes it spreads out,
so that I expand like skin that is swollen by fat;
since you entered me by such a narrow passage,
I cannot dare to believe that you will ever come out.

Just as air enters a ball in such a way
that the same breath
which opens the valve from outside closes it from within,
so do I feel the image of your beautiful face
come within my soul through my eyes:
as it opens my eyes, so it shuts itself in my soul;
and like a ball banged by a fist on its first bounce,
when struck by your eyes I at once rise up to heaven.⁶⁷

The image of the beloved person who is being gazed on first penetrates into the soul through the eyes; in a second step, the person filled in this way is touched by the visual ray of the beloved person; and only then is the soul able to ascend to heaven. This could be understood in the context of the preceding poems as suggesting that it is only the view of the beloved person – i.e., the divine ray of light when it enters the eyes – that initiates the process of image transformation and assimilation that is required to recognise God.

⁶⁷ *Tu m'entrasti per gli occhi, ond'io mi spargo,
come grappol d'agresto in un'ampolla,
che dopo 'l collo cresce ov'è più largo;
così l'immagin tua, che fuor m'immolla,
dentro per gli occhi cresce, ond'io m'allargo,
come pelle ove gonfia la midolla;
entrando in me per sì stretto viaggio,
che tu mai n'esca ardir creder non aggio.
Come quand'entra in una palla il vento,
che col medesimo fiato l'animella,
come l'apre di fuor, la serra drento,
così l'immagin del tuo volto bella
per gli occhi dentro all'alma venir sento;
e come gli apre, poi sì serra in quella;
e come palla pugno al primo balzo,
percosso da' tu' occhi al ciel po' m'alzo.*

The same ambivalence is also found in Ficino, and not by accident. Like Michelangelo, both during the emergence of divine love and also during the emergence of common love, he often mentions the visual ray that is emitted by one person and which calls forth love in the person viewed in this way; however, in numerous other places, in which he is concerned exclusively with divine love, he speaks like Michelangelo of images of the beloved person that penetrate through the eyes into the soul of the gazer and are compared and assimilated there to the inner original image.⁶⁸

Those who [...] are so constituted that the image of the more beautiful of them, penetrating through the eyes into the soul of the other, matches and corresponds completely with a certain identical image which was formed [...] in its inner nature from its creation. The soul thus stricken recognizes the image before it as something which is its own. It is in fact almost exactly like the image which this soul has long possessed within itself, and which it tried to imprint on its own body, but was not able to do. The soul then puts the visual image beside its own interior image, and if anything is lacking in the former [...] the soul restores it by reforming it. Then the soul loves that reformed image as its own work. This is how it happens that lovers are so deceived that they think the beloved more beautiful than he is. For in the course of time they do not see the beloved in the real image of him received through the senses, but in an image already reformed by the lover's soul, in the likeness of its own innate idea, an image which is more beautiful than the body itself [...]. By these the eye of the soul is often aroused to contemplate the universal Ideas of things which it contains in itself. And for this reason at the same time that the soul is perceiving a certain man in sensation, and conceiving him in the imagination, it can contemplate, by means of

⁶⁸ The image of the viewed body only plays a decisive role in the origin of divine love; common love, by contrast, is due only to penetration by the pathological gaze. Cf. *De amore* VII.10: 'How lovers are bewitched we seem to have explained sufficiently above, if only we may add that mortals are bewitched the most when, by very frequent gazing, directing their sight eye to eye, they join lights with lights and drink a long love together, poor wretches. As Musaeus says, the whole cause and origin of this illness is certainly the eye. For this reason anyone who is powerful in the shining of his eyes, even if he is less attractive in his other parts, drives people mad who look at him very often, for the reason we have given. [...] The harmony of the other parts besides the eyes seems not to have the power to cause this disease but only a tendency to occasion it. Certainly such an arrangement encourages one looking at it from a distance to come nearer. Then when he is looking close at hand, it detains him for a long time in mere contemplation of it. But it is only the sight which wounds him as he lingers. But as for that moderate love which participates in divinity, and which is the main subject in this banquet, not only the eye but the harmony and pleasantness of all the parts concur in causing it.'

the intellect, the reason and definition common to all men through its innate Idea of humanity.⁶⁹

Not only is the process described here the same as in Michelangelo; in addition, Ficino applies the same term to the faculty of the soul that actually perceives 'beauty's universal form'. Only those endowed with an *intelletto sano*, a healthy intellect, are able to perceive the divine.

Here again, however, as in Michelangelo, this process of penetration and transformation of external images remains unconnected with the ray of light that initiates love and the ascent (the return) of the soul – both in relation to the practical sequence and the theoretical context. In any case, the penetration of the images is not explained by the visual-ray theory, although it would have been easy to do so and had often been done before Ficino. We may recall, for example, the explanations of the visual process by Hipparchus or Photios mentioned above, to take only one ancient and one medieval example. He also does not refer to the widespread theory among the Arabic Aristotelians that images penetrate as a result of light rays that emanate from objects or are reflected by them, although this would at least have been consistent with his metaphysics of light. Instead – and surprisingly – Ficino appears to be thinking here of the ancient atomistic theory of a constant flow of material images, which he also uses to explain the influence of the stars on the Earth. In both cases, however, he refers frequently to the fourth book of Lucretius' *Natural History*, which provides us with the most detailed description of the atomistic theory of vision.⁷⁰ The fact that Ficino repeatedly cites Lucretius as an ancient authority on questions of love, and the notable similarity between his description of the penetration of images with the Epicurean's description, appear to justify

⁶⁹ *De amore* VI.6. Cf. the passages mentioned in note 54 above, and also Ficino's letter to Pellegrino degli Agli: 'But we do indeed perceive the reflection of divine beauty with our eyes and mark the resonance of divine harmony with our ears – those bodily senses which Plato considers the most perceptive of all. Thus when the soul has received through the physical senses those images which are within material objects, we remember what we knew before, when we existed outside the prison of the body.' In *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, vol. 1 (London: 1975 [reprint 1988]) 44. Cf. *Enneads* II.8; Betussi G., *Il Raverta – Trattati d'amore del Cinquecento*, ed. G. Zonta (Bari: 1967) 17–18; Bruno G., *Eroici Furori* I.4.

⁷⁰ See in particular *De amore* VI.9; VII.5–6; cf. Sergius K., 'Schattenhafte Körper, erotische Bilder. Zur Zeichentheorie im Renaissance-Neuplatonismus bei Marsilio Ficino', in Kubaczek M. – Pircher W. – Waniek E. (eds.), *Kunst, Zeichen, Technik. Philosophie am Grund der Medien* (Münster: 2004) 63–86.

this conclusion – although Ficino does not explicitly use Lucretius to explain the flow of images.

Theory of Love and Theory of Art

Let us return once again to Michelangelo. The question arises whether this conception also influenced Michelangelo's thinking with regard to his sculptural work. In fact, in the few instances in which Michelangelo mentions his artistic endeavours – as in poem no. 164, below – he clearly uses the same structure as that developed earlier in his love poems.

From birth I was given beauty
as a faithful guide to my vocation;
it is a light and mirror for me in both the arts (sculpture and painting).
If anyone thinks otherwise, he is quite mistaken.
This beauty alone carries the eye to that beauty
which here I set myself to paint and sculpt.

Those of rash and foolish judgment
drag down beauty to the senses, beauty that moves
and carries every healthy intellect to heaven;
eyes that are infirm do not move from the mortal to the divine sphere,
but remain forever firmly fixed here down on earth;
to think of rising without beauty is a vain hope.⁷¹

The ninth line, 'beauty carries every healthy intellect to heaven' (*porta al cielo ogni intelletto sano*) closely resembles the device which, according to Giorgio Vasari, accompanied Michelangelo's personal emblem – a

⁷¹ *Per fido esempio alla mia vocazione
nel parto mi fu data la bellezza
che d'ambo l'arti m'è lucerna e specchio.
S'altro si pensa, è falsa opinione.
Questo sol l'occhio porta a quella bellezza
c'a pingere e scolpir qui m'apparecchio
S'e'è guidizi temerari e sciocchi
al senso tiran la beltà, che muove
e porta al cielo ogni intelletto sano,
dal mortale al divin non vanno gli occhi
infermi, e fermi sempre pur là d'ove
ascender senza grazia è pensier vano.*

Cf. poem no. 151 ('*Non ha l'ottima artista alcun concetto*): 'The greatest artist does not have any concept (*concetto*)/which a single piece of marble does not itself contain within its excess, though only a hand that obeys the intellect (*intelletto*) can get to it.'; also poem no. 236 ('*Se ben concetto ha la divina parte*'); and nos. 109 and 68, *ex negativo*.

symbol of three interwoven circles (representing sculpture, painting, and architecture). The motto reads: *‘Levan al cielo nostro intelletto’*: the three arts – sculpture, painting and architecture – raise the intellect to heaven.⁷²

The key word *intelletto* is specifically used to refer to Michelangelo by several contemporary art theorists,⁷³ all of whom directly mention the importance of the intellect for him. At the same time, however, they (like most modern interpreters)⁷⁴ distort his thought in two respects. As we have seen in Michelangelo’s love poems, the *intelletto* does not perceive divine beauty (‘beauty’s universal form’) directly, either through earthly beauty or in pure transcendence. The sensual image first has to be transmuted into an inner image by being compared and assimilated to the divine archetype stored within the soul at its creation. Michelangelo calls this inner image, the result of this transformation, ‘a concept of beauty, an image cast or seen within the heart’.⁷⁵ And this *concetto* has to be reproduced by the artist. On the other hand – and this is the second distortion of Michelangelo’s thought by his successors and interpreters – in his poems, Michelangelo never speaks of ‘ideas’ in the conventional Platonic sense, as the transcendent prototypes of this or that sensual thing or concept. Michelangelo actually never uses the term. And, as we have seen, it is not possible (as is usually done) to equate *concetto* or *forma universale* with ‘idea’ in the broader sense. In his

⁷² Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters Sculptors & Architects*, trans. G. du C. de Vere, vol. 9 (New York: 1976; reprinted from London 1912–1915) 138.

⁷³ Hollanda F. de, *Diálogos em Roma I* (1538), in *Conversations on Art with Michelangelo Buonarroti*, ed. G.D. Folliero-Metz (Heidelberg: 1998) 77: ‘For painting is nothing but a copy of the perfections of God and a recollection of His painting; it is a music and a melody which only intellect can understand’; Danti V., *Il primo libro del trattato delle perfette proportioni* (1567) cap. 11, in *Trattati d’arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, ed. P. Barocchi, vol. 1 (Bari: 1960) 235ff., esp. 238: Michelangelo is said to have found the true proportions of the human body not through anatomical studies, but through his ‘misura intellettuale’; Armenini G.B., *De’ veri precetti della pittura* (Ravenna: 1586) l.ii.23, ed. M. Gorrieri (Turin: 1988) 36f.: ‘non deve seguirsi il giudicio solamente dell’occhio esteriore [...] ma ricorrer bisogna all’occhio dell’intelletto’; Bellori G.P., *Vite de’ pittori, scultori et architetti moderni – The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (Cambridge, MA: 2005) 57: ‘the Idea [...] measured by the compass of the intellect, it becomes the measure of the hand.’ Cf. Clements R.J., ‘Eye, Mind, and Hand in Michelangelo’s Poetry’, in: *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 69 (1954) 324–336; Clements R.J., *Michelangelo’s Theory of Art* (Zurich: 1961) 1–66.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Summers D., *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton: 1981) 203–233 and Panofsky E., *Idea. Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie* (Leipzig: 1924, Berlin: 1993) 64–72.

⁷⁵ No. 38: ‘un concetto di bellezza immaginato e vista dentro al cuore’.

poems, Michelangelo is evidently only interested in 'beauty's universal form', which is absolute divine beauty – ultimately, God himself, as reflected in the human body. Similarly, in his visual art, Michelangelo is also interested in the human body alone. There is hardly any depiction of real space in his work, either of an interior or of the exterior world; there is no spatial perspective. In this way, on analogy with the beautiful in the human body, his art also has an appellative quality and an anagogical function, allowing or provoking the act of transcendence. The depiction of the body is intended to communicate to the viewer the experience of transcendence, as experienced by Michelangelo in love and interpreted by him with the help of Neo-Platonism. It was not least for this reason that sculpture was the artistic genre he most preferred. In his letter replying to Benedetto Varchi's survey of the ranking of the arts, for example, he writes:

In my opinion painting is considered good to the extent that it approaches relief and relief is to be considered bad the closer it approaches painting; and so I used to feel that sculpture was the lantern of painting and that the distinction between them was the same as that which exists between the sun and the moon.⁷⁶

It may be no accident that Michelangelo here recalls the Platonic metaphor of the sun – the point from which we started out in order to show that Michelangelo's theory of love, and consequently his theory of art, cannot be explained without the Neo-Platonist version of ancient conceptions of vision shaped by Ficino.

⁷⁶ *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, ed. P. Barocchi, vol. 1 (Bari: 1960) 82; cited from the translation by Mendelsohn L., *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's Due Lezioni and Cinquecento Art Theory* (Ann Arbor: 1982) 158. Very similar words are put into Michelangelo's mouth by Armenini G.B., *De' veri precetti della pittura* (Ravenna: 1586) III.226f.

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SPIRITS OF LOVE:
CASTIGLIONE AND NEO-PLATONIC DISCOURSES
OF VISION

Wietse de Boer

The Western tradition has long organised its understanding of human perception by positing the existence of five senses in a more or less stable hierarchy. In philosophical, religious and literary discourses, vision tended to reign supreme as the sharpest, noblest and most spiritual of the senses; it was followed, at times contested, by hearing; and most often, smell, taste and touch occupied the bottom rungs of the ladder, constituting the lowliest, most physical forms of perception.¹ The stability, ubiquity and stereotypical nature of this abstraction, which was dominant well into the early modern period, make it hard to fathom its relationship to lived experience. It is from the appropriation and deployment of the stereotype within concrete historical settings that we can sometimes glean some insight in the experience of perception.

The present essay pursues just this kind of insight based on a seemingly unpromising source – Baldassare Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* (1528). Castiglione discussed the senses, particularly vision, in ways that initially appear entirely conventional. He relied, probably indirectly, on the medieval medical tradition in explaining perception as the action of 'spirits that are most subtle vapors made of the purest and brightest part of the blood' (IV.65).² He also drew on Renaissance Neo-Platonism in idealising vision as the principal gateway to love. The eye alone (possibly supplemented by hearing) was fit to perceive beauty, the object and source of love. Undoubtedly, the 'spiritual' view of visual perception served, in Castiglione's book as in other courtly-literary dialogues of the early Cinquecento, to uphold the respectability of court culture.

¹ Jütte R., *Geschichte der Sinne. Von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace* (Munich: 2000) 65–83; Naumann-Beyer W., *Anatomie der Sinne im Spiegel von Philosophie, Ästhetik, Literatur* (Cologne-Weimar-Vienna: 2003).

² The editions I have used are: Castiglione B., *Il libro del Cortegiano*, ed. W. Barberis (Turin: 1998); *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. C.S. Singleton (1959), Norton Critical Edition, ed. D. Javitch (New York-London: 2002). References in the text are based on the conventional chapter division used in both editions.

Yet, if this was Castiglione's goal, his book also evidences serious qualms about received notions of perception and sexuality. An examination of the manuscript tradition of the *Cortegiano* suggests an increasing awareness of vision's moral dangers, which undercut Castiglione's idealism, prompted a moralizing response on his part, and complicated the final version of his book. Such anxieties probably went beyond Castiglione's personal views. During the mid-Cinquecento, the Neo-Platonic debate about vision and love reached an impasse, soon to be overshadowed by Counter-Reformation censorship and new discourses about sense and sensuality. Castiglione's case, and the trend he appears to inaugurate, contribute to the growing evidence of a sixteenth-century crisis in the economy of perception, and particularly vision.

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In the *editio princeps* of his *Cortegiano*, Castiglione articulated his understanding of vision in brief comments interspersed across the debate on courtly love, in books III and IV. He explained the working of visual communication especially in book III, where he had the main speaker, Giuliano de' Medici, discuss the ways in which the courtier conveyed his love to a lady. The eyes were instrumental as 'faithful messengers' (*fidi messaggeri*, III.66):

Because those vital spirits that come forth from the eyes, being generated near the heart, enter in through other eyes (at which they are aimed as an arrow at a target) and penetrate naturally to the heart as if it were their proper abode, and, mingling with those other spirits there and with the very subtle kind of blood (*natura di sangue*) which these have in them, they infect the blood near the heart to which they have come, and warm it, and make it like themselves and ready to receive the impression of that image which they have brought with them (III.66).³

Thus vision occurred when the eyes received spirits carrying the 'impression' of an image, and passed them on to the heart. This was an

³ Castiglione B., *Il libro del Cortegiano* 340: 'perché que' vivi spirti che escono per gli occhi, per esser generati presso al core, entrando ancor negli occhi, dove sono indirizzati come saetta al segno, naturalmente penetrano al core come a sua stanza ed ivi si confondono con quegli altri spirti e, con quella sottilissima natura di sangue che hanno seco, infettano il sangue vicino al core, dove son pervenuti, e lo riscaldano e fannolo a sé simile ed atto a ricevere la impression di quella imagine che seco hanno portata...'

active process: a little later the Magnifico Giuliano compared the eyes to 'soldiers [lying] in ambush', and described their action as sending forth 'rays'. The process was complicated where visual communication took place: when two lovers' eyes met, so did the spirits: in their 'sweet encounter each takes on the other's qualities'.

In passing references elsewhere in the book, Castiglione shows that, to his mind, spirits were similarly instrumental in other forms of perception, like taste and hearing. The sick could find their palate 'spoiled by corrupt vapors' and unfit to appreciate even rare and delicate wines (II.1). And the style of Bidone of Asti, a renowned singer in the chapel of Leo X, was so dramatic 'that the spirits of the listener are stirred and take fire, and are kept in such suspense that they seem to be uplifted to heaven' (I.37).⁴

Far from being an original thinker, Castiglione drew here on a dense body of speculation about perception, sexuality, and general physiology. A central assumption was the notion that human life, and particularly the relations between body and soul, could be explained by the actions of a 'vital spirit' which, originating in the heart and travelling through the blood vessels, regulated the interactions of body and soul. This view rested on ancient theories about the role of *pneuma* (spirit), along with heat and blood, in physiological and psychological processes. Both Aristotle and Galen, despite major differences in their physiologies, had argued that *pneuma* was to account for the mechanics of perception.⁵ The classical heritage had been elaborated in medical theories of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and applied particularly to the field of sexuality. Vision, seen as the action of the vital spirit, was here ascribed an essential role. Already the Salernitan doctors explained sexual arousal in these terms. Love, one of their *quaestiones* stated, was a pleasure arising from either the soul or the body; in both cases, it depended on the eyes. This is how: 'The spirit transmitted by the optic nerve is emitted outwards to apprehend the things outside; having grasped those things, it embraces them and represents them to the superior part of the soul'.⁶

⁴ I have slightly changed Singleton's translation.

⁵ On Aristotle, see Freudenthal G., *Aristotle's Theory of Material Substance: Heat and Pneuma, Form and Soul* (Oxford: 1995) esp. 132–134, 144–148; on Galen, see Rocca, J., *Galen on the Brain: Anatomical Knowledge and Physiological Speculation in the Second Century AD* (Leiden-Boston: 2003) esp. 66 and n. 97.

⁶ Jacquart D. – Thomasset C., *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. M. Adamson (Princeton, N.J.: 1988) 48–50, 78–86 (83).

Castiglione's familiarity with some of this heritage can be demonstrated quite securely. We know he owned a copy of the medieval classic *De physionomia* by the philosopher Michael Scot (c. 1175–c. 1235), a work that closely examined sexual physiology.⁷ In a section devoted mostly to the influence of food on sexual activity, Scot had dwelt briefly on perception: 'The *species* [images] of the beauty of another body stir up the lustful desire to join with this body in love through vision and touch'.⁸ But Castiglione's discourse showed an even more obvious affinity with humanist reinterpretations of the classical heritage. The famous commentary on Plato's *Symposium* by Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) is an evident, and frequently noted, model.

In fact, Ficino's explication of love comes very close to the Castiglione passage we have analysed above:

Certainly three things seem to be in us: the soul, the spirit and the body. The soul and the body, which are by nature very different from each other, are joined by means of the spirit, which is a certain very subtle and bright vapor produced by the heat of the heart from the most subtle part of the blood. Spread from there through all parts of the body, the spirit receives the powers (*virtus*) of the soul and transmits them to the body (VI.6).⁹

The physiological assumptions and the terminology (*spirit*, *vapour*, *subtle*, *bright*, etc.) used here coincide largely with Castiglione's discourse.¹⁰ Earlier in the *Cortegiano*, for example, Castiglione had explained that the decline of old age 'deprive[s] the blood of a great part of the vital spirits' and weakens 'these organs through which the soul exercises its powers' (II.1).

⁷ Rebecchini G., "The Book Collection and Other Possessions of Baldassarre Castiglione", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 61 (1998) 17–52 (43).

⁸ Scot M., *Liber physiognomiae* [Venice: J. de Fivizano, 1477], chapter 1, c. [a6]^v: 'Mouent autem luxuriam species decoris alterius corporis ad corpus sibi amore conueniens uisu & tactu'.

⁹ Ficino M., *Commentaire sur le Banquet de Platon*, Latin ed. P. Laurens (Paris: 2002) 207. Here and in the following quotes (identified with conventional chapter indications in the main text), I have used the translation, at some points slightly amended, offered in id., *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. S. Jayne (Dallas: 1985).

¹⁰ One might note that Ficino tends to use the singular 'spirit', whereas Castiglione speaks of 'spirits'; it would be possible to surmise that Castiglione's plural suggests an atomistic and materialistic rather than abstract or uncorporeal understanding of perception; yet Ficino occasionally uses the plural as well, as in the passage quoted in the next paragraph.

Ficino, too, had explained vision through the mediating action of the spirit or spirits: 'But, just as this vapor of the spirits is born from the blood, so also it itself sends out rays like itself through the eyes, which are like glass windows' (VII.4). In return, the spirit 'receives through the organs of the senses images of external bodies' (VI.6). Finally, for Ficino as for Castiglione, vision was the essential conduit of sexual attraction. Thus Ficino could say, as Castiglione would, that 'the eye, wide open and fixed upon someone, shoots the arrows of its own rays into the eyes of the bystander, and along with those arrows, which are the vehicles of the spirits, aims that sanguine vapor which we call spirit' (VII.4).

Yet for Ficino, this process was ambivalent. It could be applied for good, in the spiritual and virtuous love that was the animating force of Ficino's cosmology; or for ill, in the lust or 'venereal madness' that was really the opposite of love (I.4). In this 'vulgar' love, the eye could turn into an aggressor, shooting off poisonous arrows and corrupting the blood of the person who was the object of his gaze; it was a form of bewitchment (VII.4). This reference to the magical dimension of vision makes clear that Ficino's argument was much more than a natural-philosophical explanation: in examining the complexities of love, he drew upon a late-medieval scholarly tradition that had sought to explain lovesickness by combining medical theory with magical thought.¹¹ As will become clear further on, his distinction between vulgar love and a Platonically inspired divine love was crucial to the purpose of his text.

Castiglione's description echoed the magical-medical tradition as well: the spirits of the lover 'infected' the blood of the beloved, 'the eyes dart forth and bewitch, like sorcerers', and in the encounter of the spirits a fusion took place that the Magnifico likened to the *malocchio* 'of a diseased eye which, by looking fixedly into a sound eye, communicates its own disease to it' (III.66). These remarks complicate the seemingly benign account of the eyes as the 'faithful messengers' of the heart, and strengthen the implications of male sexual aggression evident in an earlier passage (III.50), which David Quint has called 'one of the

¹¹ Wack M.F., "From Mental Faculties to Magical Philters: The Entry of Magic into Academic Medical Writings on Lovesickness, 13th–17th Centuries", in Beecher D.A. – Ciavolella M. (eds.), *Eros and Anteros: The Medical Traditions of Love in the Renaissance* (Ottawa: 1992) 9–31.

darkest moments of Castiglione's book'.¹² But here this tension is not yet resolved in a distinction between vulgar and divine love. That happens only in book IV, where the problem becomes macroscopic, and where, consequently, the engagement with Ficino deepens. A closer examination is in order.

2

The physiological explanation of vision and sexuality we have discussed above returns in brief remarks in book IV of the *Cortegiano*. There, for instance, Castiglione has Pietro Bembo speak of the 'lively spirits which shine forth from the [lady's] eyes [...] to add fresh fuel to the fire' of love (IV.62). Further on, Bembo notes how the lover perceives the 'image of beauty' by 'send[ing] forth through the eyes those spirits that are most subtle vapors made of the purest and brightest part of the blood' (IV.65).

Yet in book IV this understanding of visual perception moves into new territory, even as Castiglione's reliance on Ficino increases. The context of Bembo's remarks is his famous speech on divine love. The panegyric rests on the Platonic theory of love as 'a certain desire to enjoy beauty' (IV.51: *un certo desiderio di fruir la bellezza*). Thus defined, love needs a cognitive basis, which in turn depends on the senses. At this point, however, Bembo imposes a limit: the attempt to avoid carnal temptation leads to the exclusion of the senses considered the lowliest, i.e. the closest to the materiality of the body – smell, taste and especially touch. Beauty, then, can be enjoyed 'only by way of that sense whereof this beauty is the true object, namely, the faculty of sight' (IV.62). Vision, supplemented by hearing, thus comes to condition the pursuit of courtly love:

Therefore let him [the courtier] keep aloof from the blind judgment of sense, and with his eyes enjoy the radiance of his Lady, her grace, her amorous sparkle, the smiles, the manners and all the other pleasant ornaments of her beauty. Likewise with his hearing let him enjoy the sweetness of her voice, the modulation of her words, the harmony of her music (if his lady love be a musician). Thus, he will feed his soul on the sweetest food by means of these two senses – which partake little of the

¹² Quint D., "Courtier, Prince, Lady: The Design of the *Book of the Courtier*" (2000), in Castiglione B., *The Book of the Courtier* 352–365 (355).

corporeal, and are reason's ministers – without passing to any unchaste appetite through desire for the body (IV.62).

In this striking passage, the definition of courtly love – an ideal far removed from Ficino's philosophical interests – nevertheless moves very close to Ficino's moral concerns. Like Castiglione, the Florentine humanist had taken pains to stress the non-corporeal nature of vision, even while their explanation of perception drew on a long tradition of physiological theories that suggested otherwise. Hence Ficino's insistence that the images conveyed by the visual spirit

cannot be imprinted directly on the soul, because incorporeal substance, which is superior to bodies, cannot be formed by them through the receiving of images. But the soul, being present to the spirit everywhere, easily sees the images of bodies shining in it, as if in a mirror, and through those judges the bodies. This cognition is called by the Platonists sense (VI.6).

In a recent study on the evolution of the philosophy of love in the Renaissance, Sabrina Ebbersmeyer has provided a wide-ranging explanation of this spiritualizing interpretation of the Platonic heritage. From the mid-fifteenth century, she argues, the challenge for Neo-Platonists like Bessarion and Ficino consisted in rendering the discourse on eros acceptable as a worthy philosophical enterprise within the context of a Christian culture. The discussion of the senses was essential in this debate: only by limiting Platonic love to experiences accessible to vision and hearing was it possible to spiritualise it and prevent suspicions of immorality. This debate among the refined humanists of the Medici circle had been dampened by the advent of Savonarola, but returned with renewed vigour in the Italian courts of the early Cinquecento.¹³

Yet the court environment, Ebbersmeyer argues, caused the Neo-Platonic philosophy of love to be secularised. Bembo's *Asolani* (1505) and Castiglione's *Cortegiano* might borrow from Neo-Platonism to ennoble courtly, heterosexual love, but a religious or metaphysical purpose was lacking. The argument appears strained. It rests, as far as Castiglione is concerned, on the isolation of the Bembo speech as 'an implant, a

¹³ Ebbersmeyer S., *Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft. Studien zur Rezeption und Transformation der Liebestheorie Platons in der Renaissance* (Munich: 2002) esp. 64–68 (on Bessarion), 72–78 (Ficino), and 120–123 (Savonarola). Recent discussions of Ficino's attempts to reconcile Christianity and Platonism can be found in Allen M.J.B. – Rees V. (eds.), *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden: 2002).

Fremdkörper’, and on the highlighting of the (in reality fairly minimal) dissent Bembo encounters.¹⁴ The case for continuity between Ficino and Castiglione seems strong, as their views on vision suggest. Decisive support for this argument emerges from an analysis of the manuscript tradition of the *Cortegiano*, presented in the following pages. Castiglione’s revisions of his evolving manuscript demonstrate that he developed Bembo’s Ficinian speech precisely to provide a moral and religious grounding for an exclusive lifestyle turning on the elegant romance of courtiers and court ladies. The sensorial discipline implicit in the theory upheld this lifestyle as a model of civilisation: in controlling the passions, particularly male aggression and sexuality, it was at once sophisticated, morally decent, and religiously respectable.¹⁵ But as we will see, the outcome – achieved after much agonising on Castiglione’s part – was very much a compromise. It was a fragile idealisation that risked collapsing when exposed to the winds of a new cultural climate.

3

In recent decades, scholars have enriched our understanding of Castiglione’s *magnum opus* by enhancing the critical analysis of the text with a methodological innovation. This has been made possible by the survival of five manuscripts, composed and revised from ca. 1513 up to the book’s publication in 1528, along with several additional fragments, going back to the first decade of the century. This unique circumstance has allowed an evolutionary perspective on this work. Building on the philological studies of Ghino Ghinassi, scholars like José Guidi and, more recently, Amedeo Quondam, Umberto Motta and Olga Zorzi Pugliese have demonstrated how, over a decade and more, the drafts

¹⁴ Ebbersmeyer S., *Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft* 149–162 (161).

¹⁵ Quint D., “Courtier, Prince, Lady” has similarly insisted on the civilizing ideal underlying the *Cortegiano*. Within the limits of this essay, I cannot do justice to the religious aspects of the Bembo speech; on these, see Stäuble A., “L’inno all’amore nel quarto libro del ‘Cortegiano’”, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 162 (1985) 481–519; Guidi J., “De l’amour courtois à l’amour sacré: La condition de la femme dans l’œuvre de B. Castiglione”, in *Images de la femme dans la littérature italienne de la Renaissance. Préjugés misogynes et aspirations nouvelles* (Paris: 1980) 9–80, esp. 77f. A different interpretation, suggesting that Castiglione, like Ficino, divorced the contemplative ideal from traditional religion ‘to replace it with private forms of spirituality’, is proposed by James Hankins, “Renaissance Philosophy and Book IV of *Il Cortegiano*”, in Castiglione B., *The Book of the Courtier* 377–388, esp. 387f.

of the *Cortegiano* evolved with the dramatic changes in Castiglione's life, the political situation of Italy and Europe at large, and the cultural debate.¹⁶ Some scholars have objected to this approach or downplayed the significance of its results, but the evidence thus far is strong enough to proceed with this hypothesis.¹⁷

The *Cortegiano* underwent its greatest transformation in the last phase of its development, between the so-called Second and Third Redactions.¹⁸ The main result was the division of a long, unwieldy third book into the new books III and IV. The old book III, devoted to a meandering *querelle des femmes*, was turned into a more agile discussion of the perfect court lady. The new book IV introduced an ethical turn (much commented on by later critics) which presented the courtier with a deeper political and metaphysical purpose. The political purpose, explicated by Ottaviano Fregoso in the first part of the book, imposed on the courtier the serious and delicate function of princely advisor; the metaphysical one, in Bembo's speech, provided a spiritual justification for his role in court culture and especially love. It is true, as Quondam has pointed out, that Castiglione had introduced an ethical consideration, at least within the political realm, as early as the first manuscript of his work; and the evolution of this aspect, resulting in Fregoso's discourse in book IV, has now been studied.¹⁹ But

¹⁶ Ghinassi G., "Fasi dell'elaborazione del Cortegiano", *Studi di filologia italiana* 25 (1967) 155–196; of Guidi's many studies, the most relevant here is: Guidi J., "De l'amour courtois"; Quondam A., *Questo povero Cortegiano. Castiglione, il Libro, la Storia* (Rome: 2000); Motta U., *Castiglione e il mito di Urbino. Studi sulla elaborazione del "Cortegiano"* (Milan: 2003); Zorzi Pugliese O., "Renaissance Ideologies in *Il Libro del Cortegiano*: From the Manuscript Drafts to the Printed Edition", *Studi Rinascimentali* 162 (2003) 35–42.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Wayne Rebhorn's objection that such explanations either 'turn *Il Cortegiano* into disguised autobiography [...] or they simply content themselves by substituting consideration of external, biographical details for analysis of internal structure': Rebhorn W., *Courtly Performances: Masking and Festivity in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier* (Detroit: 1978) 183; Scaglione and Barberis have downplayed the approach's significance: see Scaglione A., *Knights At Court: Courtliness, Chivalry and Courtesy From Ottoman Germany to the Italian Renaissance* (Los Angeles: 1991) 238f.; Barberis in his introduction to Castiglione B., *Il libro del Cortegiano* liif.

¹⁸ Of the five manuscripts of the *Cortegiano*, the last three contain complete and autonomous versions of the book; scholars refer to these as the First, Second and Third Redactions. The manuscripts in question are ms. C (BAV, Vat. Lat. 8205), ms. D (BAV, Vat. Lat. 8206) and ms. L (Bibl. Laurenziana, Florence, ms. Ashburnhamiano 409). A critical edition of ms. D is offered in *La seconda Redazione del "Cortegiano" di Baldassarre Castiglione*, ed. G. Ghinassi (Florence: 1968); ms. L was the basis of the *editio princeps* (1528).

¹⁹ Quondam A., "La nascita del Cortegiano. Prime ricognizioni sul manoscritto autografo", *Nuova rivista di letteratura italiana* 2 (1999) 423–441 (429f.); Stäuble A., "Principe

the intentions underlying Bembo's speech, which Castiglione practically wrote anew between the Second and Third Redactions, have not received the attention they deserve. The hypothesis I wish to pursue here is that increasing moral concerns prompted Castiglione to re-invent Bembo's intervention and turn it into the apotheosis of his work.

The biographical-historical context within which this shift occurred is fairly well known. Mss. C and D, both complete versions of the *Cortegiano*, were copied out in 1515–16 and 1520–21, respectively. But in the following years Castiglione drastically revised and expanded ms. D. The result was a new fair copy, completed on May 23, 1524 (ms. L). The intervening years had been dramatic: Castiglione's wife Ippolita had died on August 25, 1520, and the bereft widower had received clerical orders on June 9, 1521. Meanwhile, his cultural milieu and the larger world had changed as well. On December 1, 1521, the unexpected death of Leo X threw the splendid papal court, where Castiglione had resided for several years, into an abrupt crisis. As Leo's lavish lifestyle and conduct of church affairs drew increasing criticism, including Castiglione's, the arrival of the stern northerner Hadrian VI announced a new climate of austerity and the end of an ingrained culture of patronage. Castiglione, along with many others, concluded that there was little left to achieve in Rome, so he returned to Mantua, the home of his lord, the Duke of Mantua, and his own. There, it appears, he did most of the revisions on ms. D. By the time he went back to Rome, in November 1523, beckoned by the accession of a new Medici pope, Clement VII, he probably carried with him a manuscript ready to be copied out once more.²⁰

The new book IV, the most evident outcome of Castiglione's rethinking of his project, opened with an unambiguous declaration that the previous books required an ethical justification. The perfect courtier as described earlier (as Ottaviano Fregoso declared) 'may indeed be good and worthy of praise, not, however, simply and in himself, but in regard to the end to which he can be directed'. Without such a justification, many attributes of the perfect courtier could be held against him for being 'frivolities and vanities'. These included dance and song, games

e cortigiano dalla seconda alla terza redazione del *Cortegiano*: criteri e ragioni di una riscrittura (IV, iv–xlvi)”, *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 61 (1999) 641–668.

²⁰ Cartwright J., *Baldassare Castiglione. The Perfect Courtier. His Life and Letters 1478–1529* (New York: 1908), vol. 2 chs. 32–40; Cian V., *Un illustre nunzio pontificio del Rinascimento. Baldassar Castiglione* (Vatican City: 1951) 90–103.

and witticisms, along with ‘other such things as pertain to the entertainment of women and love affairs’. The qualities they required, Ottaviano proceeded in a well-known remark, ‘often serve merely to make spirits effeminate, to corrupt youth, and to lead it to a dissolute life’ (IV.4).

A culture centred on courtly love had thus provoked a moral crisis evident in sexual license and gender confusion. The remark, while not new in the manuscript tradition but here moved into a strategic place, suggests a shift in attitude that José Guidi, in reference to Castiglione’s increasingly restrictive views on women, has called a ‘new moral rigorism’.²¹ This hypothesis is worth verifying more broadly.

The evolution of Castiglione’s presentation of perception may be a good place to start. Now, it is clear that the Ficinian restriction of Platonic love to vision and hearing would make for a good fit with Castiglione’s quest for a morally acceptable version of courtly love – hence its prominent place in IV.62. This discussion appeared fairly early in Castiglione’s writing process, in mss. C and D.²² In these shorter, and differently plotted, versions of Bembo’s speech, two further differences stand out. First, in the earlier drafts Bembo’s arguments broke down (and his speech was cut short) over stubborn resistance among his audience, particularly their unwillingness to accept a notion of love that did not include touch. In the final version, Bembo met with little opposition as he advanced authoritatively through his lengthy speech – so little, in fact, that Castiglione appears to have difficulty containing it within the dialog form, and ending his work according to its conventions.²³ Second, the context of his Ficinian remark about vision and hearing had changed as well. In mss. C and D, Bembo explained the communication of love through the spirits that travelled from the heart and eyes of the lover to those of the beloved.²⁴ Such an explanation returned in IV.62, but with a dramatically different meaning. In the earlier versions, the eyes opened the way to a holy love:

Therefore when some gracious beauty presents herself to [the soul], the latter will watch her by means of the spirits and, attracted by this sweet

²¹ Guidi J., “De l’amour courtois” 80 (and 71).

²² Ms. C (BAV, ms. Vat.Lat. 8205), fol. 307v–308r; ms. D (BAV, ms. Vat.Lat. 8206), here quoted from Ghinassi’s edition, *La seconda redazione* 312f. (chapters III.117f.).

²³ It is also worth noting that Bembo’s main opponent is no longer, as in the Second Redaction, the formidable Gasparo Pallavicino, but the marginal Signor Morello da Ortona, whose interventions are repeatedly greeted with ridicule (IV.55 and IV.63).

²⁴ Ms. C, fol. 305r; for ms. D, see *La seconda redazione* 308 (III.114).

bait, begin to love her and revere her and feel a certain wonder (*maraviglia*), at once delightful and frightening, which leaves one taken aback and almost astounded.

It was ‘that fear and reverence,’ Bembo explained a bit further, ‘that one has for sacred things’.²⁵

In the final version, the path from a vision of earthly beauty to divine rapture was far more conflicted. The remark on the ‘gracious beauty’ returned in book IV, but took a different turn. This time the ‘gracious aspect of a beautiful woman’, here accompanied by ‘elegant conduct and refined manners’, was cause for grave concern. When, in fact, the courtier’s soul

begins to take pleasure in contemplating her and to feel an influence within that stirs and warms it little by little; and when those vital spirits which shine forth from her eyes continue to add fresh fuel to the fire – then, at the start, he ought to administer a quick remedy and arouse his reason, and therewith arm the fortress of his heart, and so shut out sense and appetite that they cannot enter there by force or deception (IV.62).

The ‘vital spirits’ of vision were thus unmasked as agents of vulgar love, and the heart, to deny them entrance, needed to become a fortress of reason.

This grim warning, in the final version of Bembo’s speech, became precisely the premise of the view from which we started – that the pure enjoyment of beauty, and hence the pursuit of divine love, could be based only on vision and hearing, senses ‘which partake little of the corporeal’. The contradiction is evident: out of a complex re-montage of earlier manuscript fragments, Castiglione produced statements, separated by only a few lines, that declared vision to be both one of ‘reason’s ministers’ and in need of the ‘bridle of reason’. Cracks had appeared in the idealistic Ficinian compromise that had reserved a safe space for vision. Assurances of its non-material nature could no longer take away concerns that the ‘spirits’ acted on the body as well as the soul.

Upon further examination, Bembo continues to problematise the basic assumption of his discourse – the possibility of a smooth ascent from the contemplation of beauty in the beloved woman to the rapture of divine love. In IV.65–66 Castiglione again reframes the discussion about sense perception. The subject is physical presence and absence.

²⁵ Ms. C, fol. 305r–v; *La seconda redazione* 308–309 (III.114f.).

In the much shorter version of Bembo's intervention in mss. C and D, the physiology of perception and humoural action helped explain the suffering provoked by the absence of the beloved. The premise was as follows. Beauty, by virtue of a power (*influsso*) transmitted by vision,

warms the heart, melts what was so frozen and dry that it could not germinate, and across the soul awakens some locked-up virtues which, nourished and moved by that amorous heat around the heart, attempt to emerge *en masse*.

In a poetic simile, Castiglione compared this pressure to the teething of infants. In the presence of the beloved, the exit was facilitated by 'passages (*meati*) softened and made tender by that heat'. Absence, in contrast, caused them to remain 'arid and obstructed'. The result was agony – 'the tears, laments and afflictions of the poor lovers'. Only a return to the beloved would bring relief, 'the most certain remedy to all pain, and the end to all desires'.²⁶

In the original ms. C, the debate moved on from here. Thus the question of physical presence was settled within the Neo-Platonic parameters of love as pursuit of beauty, a love inspiring 'that fear and reverence', as we have seen earlier on, 'that one has for sacred things'. Yet in revising ms. C, Castiglione evidently sensed a problem here, namely that the preoccupation with physical presence was in conflict with the aims of Platonic love. Thus, in a new, deceptively smooth transition, he had Bembo add that the soul, 'awakened from this shadow of beauty', would move on from human suffering and ascend to divine union.²⁷ Yet Bembo was interrupted here by an ironic Gaspare Pallavicino, who insisted on the need for physical presence to fulfil the love he aspired to. Bembo might try all he wanted to reject this love as 'vulgar' and to re-propose a spiritual love in which the 'eye of the intellect' superseded the 'corporeal power of vision', but all this was to no avail. In the face of the opposition he had provoked, he refused to speak any further.

The concern that was apparently lacking in the original ms. C, and added as an afterthought in its revised version, became macroscopic in the final text. In IV.65, Castiglione re-proposed the discussion of

²⁶ Ms. C, fols. 305v–306v; *La seconda redazione* 309f. (III.115).

²⁷ Thus, in ms. C, the newly inserted fol. 307r, which replaced the earlier, erased transition at the end of fol. 306v ('Erano stati la signora Duchessa et tutti gli altri attentissimi [...] quando el signor Gaspar ridendo, 'Questo divino Amore', disse, credo che buono sia e publico'). The revised version of ms. C made it practically unchanged into ms. D; see *La seconda redazione*, 310 (III.116).

physical presence, but fully embedded it in a moral warning. Bembo had paused his explanation of the spiritual ascent to caution once more that ‘the soul is most inclined to the senses’, and that while reason might ‘restrain the less than decent desires’, the constant contemplation of the body ‘often perverts true judgment’. Suffering was the punishment that resulted when the beloved was absent – and here Castiglione re-used the physiological and sensorial explanation we have seen. Yet instead of seeking relief and fulfilment in renewed presence (the original solution of ms. C), Bembo urged the courtier to pursue beauty without suffering: he ‘should with the help of reason turn his desire from the body to beauty itself’ and ‘in his imagination form her abstracted from all matter’.

Vision, the saving grace of Ficinian love, had thus come down firmly on the side of fleshly love. An essential mediator between body and soul had become, at best, a necessary evil. As soon as it released its images, reason was to step in to salvage, abstract and remove them from the physical world.²⁸

4

The fissures appearing in the neoclassical façade of Castiglione’s *Cortegiano* were probably not isolated. Starting around the time of its publication, the Neo-Platonic discourse of love, beauty and the senses appears to have been eroded progressively even as the genre’s popularity reached its apex. The subject merits further study, and the following indications are meant solely to suggest a general trend. Many of the details, including possible connections to the evolving physiology of perception, remain unclear for now.

Already Castiglione’s contemporary and friend, the courtier Mario Equicola, challenged the Neo-Platonic view of the senses dramatically. In his *De natura de amore*, published in 1525, but the result of decades of work, he appears not to have recognised the distinction between the

²⁸ It is worth noting that, in his last revision, Castiglione also introduced reason in the explanation of vision in III.66. While most of the latter goes back to ms. C, fol. 299r-301r (and *La seconda redazione* 303f., III.109f.), in the final redaction he added a cautionary note, urging the ardent lover to restrain his eyes with the ‘bridle of reason’. Here the objective was a social one, namely that his love would not be revealed ‘to one from whom he would most hide it’, and thus become public.

higher and lower senses based on a rigorous separation of soul and body; and he polemically defended the primacy of touch as essential for the reproduction of the human species.²⁹

An overt attack against the Neo-Platonists was not far off. By 1531, the Aristotelian Agostino Nifo, in his book *De pulchro*, was outright disdainful: 'And although what the Platonists have to say about beauty is expressed quite nicely and elegantly, much of it seems rhetorical rather than true'. Upon which Nifo asserted that, as both Aristotle and experience taught, all five senses were equally important in the erotic experience.³⁰ Soon his voice was joined by that of others. Sperone Speroni (also trained in the Aristotelian tradition) might adopt the form of the Platonic love dialogue in his *Dialogo di amore* (1537), but he used it to emphasise the need to pursue 'the way toward knowledge', also in love, through all senses.³¹

Apart from disdain for the world of the courts, such attacks against Platonic idealism may also have revealed a latent conflict with a darkening religious climate, particularly at a time in which the Reformation crisis deepened. This was especially true in the many places where court society and religious devotions touched upon each other. Again, this is a connection in need of further examination. One example must suffice here. In 1537, while the criticism of the courts was gathering speed, Margaret Duchess of Florence, daughter of Charles V, was the dedicatee of a confessional manual which agitated relentlessly against the sins of the senses. Of course, that theme was traditional, but here it took an insistently anti-erotic turn. The book sought out penitents, for instance, who took 'pleasure in looking at women in church', in hearing 'lecherous and immoral words', along with 'lascivious songs'; or those who took 'excessive pleasure in eating', who wore 'perfumes

²⁹ Musacchio, E., 'The Role of the Senses in Mario Equicola's Philosophy of Love', in Beecher D.A. – Ciavolella M. (eds.), *Eros and Anteros: The Medical Traditions of Love in the Renaissance* (Ottawa: 1992) 87–101 (95f.).

³⁰ Nifo A., *De pulchro liber* (Rome: 1531) cap. 25 p. 25: 'Et licet quae de pulchro Platonici tradunt, satis ornate atque composite dixerint, multa tamen eorum potius rhetorica, quam vera videntur'. Nifo makes his point about the senses at the end of the chapter (27f.) and elaborates in caps. 39–41, 58–59, and 63. See also Kraye J., 'Ficino in the Firing Line: A Renaissance Neoplatonist and His Critics', in Allen M.J.B. – Rees V. (eds.), *Marsilio Ficino 377–397* (384).

³¹ Ebbersmeyer S., *Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft* 194–196.

to incite themsel[ves] and others to lechery,' and who took 'pleasure in touching the private parts' of themselves or others.³²

In this increasingly critical academic and religious climate, then, it is no surprise that the Neo-Platonic compromise in matters of love proved unsatisfactory and all too vulnerable. By the second half of the sixteenth century the literary-courtly genre of love treatises had gone into a steep decline, and even acknowledged Platonists disavowed the courtly culture that had embraced the Platonic tradition. The Ferrarese professor of Platonic philosophy Francesco Patrizi da Cherso was nothing but scornful. The heroine of his *Amorosa filosofia* (1577) knew how to speak about love, not (as Patrizi put it) 'according to the fashion in which elegant courtiers and noble ladies in some courts can be heard discussing it, by means of queries and doubts or this superficial talk taken from Ariosto or Petrarch, but rather [grounded] in philosophical foundations, not only based on Plato, Xenophon, Plotinus and other most noble authors, ancient or less ancient', but also on the quest for 'a new philosophy, true and perfect'.³³

Patrizi, then, took novel directions even where he practiced Platonic philosophical forms. In an early *Discorso* about love he traced a trajectory that began conventionally with vision, and ascended in steps to the divine, but then returned to find fulfilment in the body. In the dialogue *Il Delfino overo del Bacio* Patrizi similarly aimed for a natural-philosophical explanation of the kiss. Castiglione, too, had discussed the kiss, precisely in Bembo's speech (IV.64), but presented it as the only form of touch that could be salvaged for a spiritual exchange.³⁴ Patrizi, in contrast, focused on the physical sensation of taste, for whose explanation he adapted, remarkably, the way in which Castiglione (in the wake of Ficino) had explained the visual communication of lovers. For Patrizi, the kiss derived its sweetness from *spiriti* which, imbued with love, found their way into the lover's mouth. Any pretence that this was a non-corporeal, 'spiritual', process was gone. Not only was Patrizi's argument not about vision but about taste – hence one of the lower senses – but he took pains to stress the physiological nature of

³² *Confessionale mandato alla Excellentissima Madama Margherita d'Austria Duchessa di Fiorenza* (Florence: 1537) [7]r–[8]r.

³³ Patrizi F., *L'amorosa filosofia*, ed. J.C. Nelson (Florence: 1963) 65 (also cited in Ebbersmeyer S., *Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft* 230).

³⁴ On this puzzling passage, see Perella N.J., *The Kiss Sacred and Profane: An Interpretive History of Kiss Symbolism and Related Religio-Erotic Themes* (Berkeley: 1969) 175–180.

his theory of spirits: 'this certainly does not happen by enchantment or spell, but it is a natural force'.³⁵

5

What about the moral concerns about love that had prompted Castiglione's strained revisions? In the burgeoning Counter-Reformation, his appeals to reason to 'arm the fortress of the heart' were clearly inadequate. More drastic measures were in the making. Of the various forms of Counter-Reformation censorship, of vision and hearing as much as the other senses, one was to strike Castiglione's own *Cortegiano*.

From the 1570s, even as the works on love and beauty had receded from the literary panorama, classics in the genre received fresh attention from the censors of the new Roman Congregation of the Index.³⁶ Castiglione's *Cortegiano* was among the first titles they scrutinised for expurgation. They criticised the book not only for imprudent remarks about religion (such as several irreverent jokes voiced by Bernardo Bibbiena), but also for its discussion of love. At one point, the hawkish Paolo Costabili, Master of the Sacred Palace and a dominant force within the young Index, appears to have asked for elimination of the entire discussion of the subject.³⁷

Costabili's departure in 1580, and intense negotiations with the upset Castiglione family and Duke of Urbino, allowed for a compromise. The theologian Antonio Ciccarelli was set to work on the expurgation, to produce a revision, published in 1584, that left the book relatively unscathed.³⁸ Bembo's speech on love survived, but in such a way that 'those parts in which the author speaks, not according to his own opinion, but according to the Platonic school' were bracketed, and alienated, by marginal notes referring the reader to Castiglione's sources. It was clear evidence both of ecclesiastical diffidence of Neo-Platonism and

³⁵ Ebbersmeyer S., *Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft* 231–233.

³⁶ Fragnito G., *Proibito capire. La Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: 2005) 153–166.

³⁷ Cian V., "Un episodio della storia della censura in Italia nel secolo XVI: L'edizione spurgata del *Cortegiano*", *Archivio storico lombardo* 14 (1887) 661–727 (673); on Costabili, see Fragnito G., *Proibito capire* 86–90.

³⁸ The best account remains Cian, V., 'Un episodio della storia della censura'.

of literary genres that tended to blur the lines between the love of women and that of God.³⁹

In other glosses, however, Ciccarelli took the opposite approach, lending his pedestrian assent to the moralising passages in Bembo's speech which (as we have seen) were the focus of Castiglione's last revision. In this vein, the long warning against the false judgment of sense (IV.52) received endorsements such as: 'Here sensual love is condemned with effective words, as is done in many other parts of the dialogue'; and 'How treacherous the senses are and how often they fill us with false opinions is demonstrated by Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*'.⁴⁰ But even this faint stamp of approval did nothing but confirm the demise of the Neo-Platonic attempt to justify courtly love by spiritualising it.

³⁹ On Counter-Reformation and Neo-Platonism, see Bolzoni L., "Ercole e i pigmei, ovvero Controriforma e intellettuali neoplatonici", *Rinascimento* 21 (1981) 285–296, and Gotor M., *I beati del papa: Santità, Inquisizione e obbedienza in età moderna* (Florence: 2002) 10f.; for a striking condemnation by a Roman censor of the poetic deification of women, see Fragnito, G., *Proibito capire* 163f.

⁴⁰ Castiglione B., *Il Cortegiano del Conte Baldassarre Castiglione, riuieduto, et corretto da Antonio Ciccarelli da Fuligni, Dottore in Teologia* (Venice: 1584) A3v, 199r and 199v.

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‘PAINTING’S ENCHANTING POISON’:
ARTISTIC EFFICACY AND THE TRANSFER OF SPIRITS*

Thijs Weststeijn

Introduction

The Uffizi Gallery in Florence possesses a painting of Pygmalion and Galatea, attributed to Bronzino [Fig. 1]. It may well be the work described by Vasari as ‘Pygmalion praying to Venus in order that his statue, receiving the spirit, becomes alive and made of [...] flesh and bones’.¹ The image shows Pygmalion’s statue that has just come to life, since in the background his offering to the love goddess is burning, while the artist kneels in front of his as yet unclad beloved who stares out of the painting, at the beholder.

Vasari deploys the concept of ‘spirit’ in his description of the sculptor’s Promethean wish to change, with divine help, lifeless stone into flesh. An animal is offered, perhaps so that through Venus’s intervention its vital ‘spirits’ may be transferred to Galatea. The myth illustrates how, on the one hand, a work of art needs *spiritus* to fulfil its aim of lifelikeness and gain affective power over the spectator. On the other hand, Pygmalion’s own spirits are kindled when looking at the statue, possibly in a replication of the flames consuming his offering; Vasari echoes Ovid who describes how ‘a fire ignites in his breast for the simulated body’.² Furthermore, Galatea’s gaze at the spectator, instead of at her desperate creator, seems to imply that Bronzino alludes to the relationship between the art object and the beholder.

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¹ ‘[D]ipinse Bronzino Pigmaliione, che fa orazione a Venere, perche la sua statua ricevendo lo spirito s’aviva, e divenga [...] di carne, e d’ossa’, Vasari G., *Le vite de’ piu eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* (Florence: 1568) III 488.

² ‘[M]iratur et haurit/pectore Pygmalion simulati corpus ignes’, *Metamorphoses* 10.252–3.

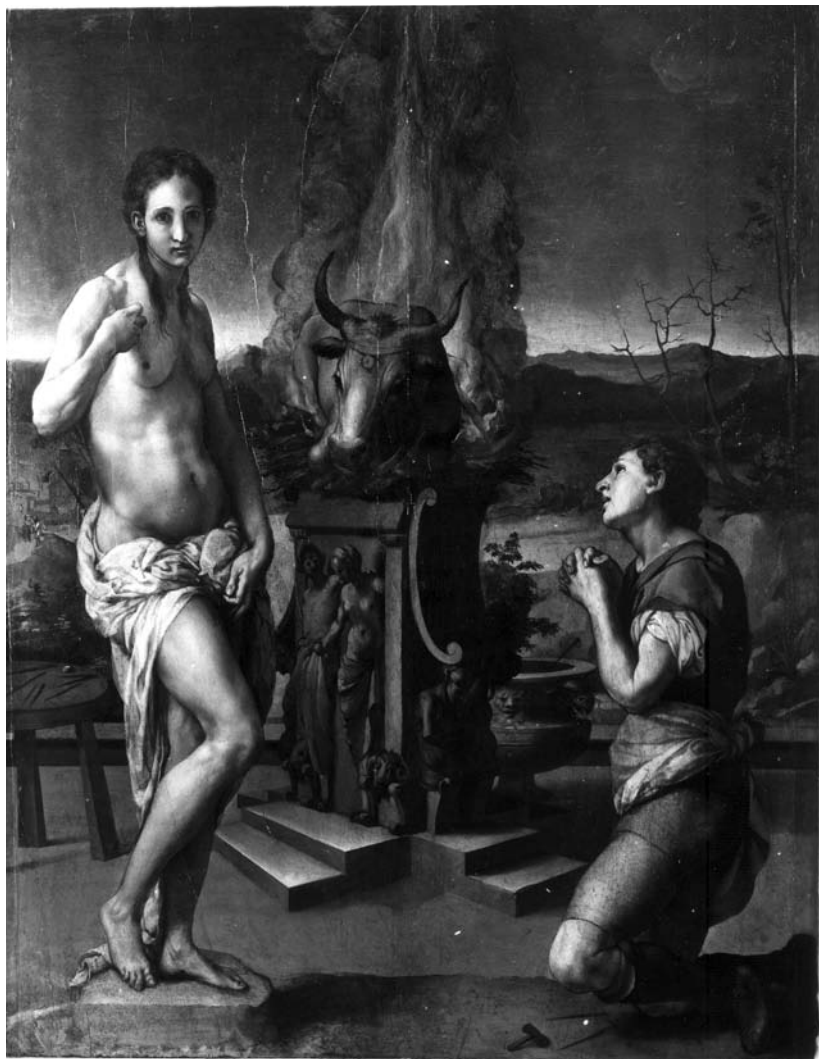


Fig. 1. Bronzino (attributed to), *Pygmalion and Galatea*, ca. 1529–1539, tempera on wood, 81 × 64 cm. Florence, Uffizi.

This article will study the term *spirito*, here used by Vasari, as part of a larger discourse in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century art theory about the nature of vision. It will examine spirits unseen in respect to the physical and mental effects ascribed to images. The confrontation with a work of art appears as a function of a two-way transfer of spirits.

We will first discuss theories about the intended effect of painting on the beholder, focussing on the artist's colouristic skill to give living form to otherwise inanimate matter. Second, the act of looking will be explored as an alleged spiritual transfer. Postulating a continuity in theoretical notions in the European 'republic of letters', remarks from Italian authors are compared to those by their Northern counterparts.³ When the 'chemistry' of *spiritus* comes to the fore, early modern notions about the efficacy of painting appear in a new light. These notions relate to a question preceding other theoretical specifications: *how* does art actually *work*?

The Work of Art and Spiritual 'Binding'

A well-known debate, originating in ancient philosophy, deals with the direction of the rays that constitute vision: do they depart from the objects seen or from the beholder's eyes? The former opinion was held by Aristotle and by Arab theorists of optics, like Alhazen and Averroes, who describe seeing as the painful reception of tiny images sent out by the objects of vision, and as an intrusion of things upon the eye and mind. Plato and Galen instead state that in the act of seeing the eye sends out rays. This theory gives the perceiver a particularly active role, as the visual rays strike the air with force and transform it, rendering it similar to themselves, so that the air becomes a sort of extension of the eye.⁴

These conflicting views are discussed in Renaissance art theory. Alberti refers to the 'philosophers' who write about 'certain rays [...] by which the images of things impress themselves in our mind', but he explicitly does not want to take a stand in the 'great dispute' concerning the direction of these rays: 'it suffices to imagine that the rays,

³ For further arguments for this continuity, see Weststeijn T., *De Zichtbare Wereld. Samuel van Hoogstratens kunsttheorie en de legitiemering van de schilderkunst in de zeventiende eeuw* (PhD Dissertation, University of Amsterdam: 2005).

⁴ Lindbergh D.C., *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago-London: 1976).

like very subtle threads, are in the straightest way connected' to the eye.⁵ The two views are combined in learned writing on art up to the seventeenth century. The influential Dutch art lover and theorist Constantijn Huygens recounts in his *Ocular Consolation* (*Ooghen-troost*, 1647): '[Some say] the eyes are bows, and shoot forth arrows; [others see this] as a pertinent lie, and [state] that [sight] is but a receptive mirror.'⁶ Franciscus Junius's painting treatise calls the eyes both 'send-messengers of our hearts' and 'sight-windows of our soul'.⁷

Whereas various authors diverge on the direction of ocular rays, they agree on the medium of transport. Alberti explains how 'the rays between the eye and the seen surface [...] meet by their proper natures and by a certain amazingly subtle substance'.⁸ Optical theories explain this '*mirabile sottigliezza*' out of which the rays are formed as the fine spiritual substance that putatively pervades the universe and is radiated by every object. Agrippa von Nettesheim, an author known to artists in Italy and in the North, explains vision through a more general theory of spiritual transfers.⁹ His *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (English ed. 1651) expand on the all-pervasive presence of *spiritus*: all sensible things emit spirits according to their qualities and they are likewise affected by spirits emanating from other things. Agrippa describes many instances when two objects, separated in distance, are allegedly connected through this spiritual medium. For this 'spiritual attachment' the English edition of his book uses the term 'binding' as well as 'ligation', which is closer to the original Latin word. Vision is explained as a particularly strong and active kind of ligation.

Agrippa describes not only sorcerers, certain magical animals or plants, but also planets, potions, weapons and other objects that affect man without directly touching him, 'binding' him with invisible 'threads'

⁵ '[C]erti raggi [...] per essi i simulacri de le cose s'imprimono nel senso. [...] A noi basti, che s'imaginiamo, che i raggi a modo d'alcune fila sottilissime, siano drittissimamente legati', Alberti L.B., *La pittura di Leon Battista Alberti* (Venice: 1547) f. 6r–6v.

⁶ 'Hier zyn ons' oogen bogen,/En schieten stralen uyt: daer is't een' grove logen;/Daer is't maer spiegel-glas, en neemt de dingen in', Huygens C., *Ooghen-troost* (Groningen: 1984) line 885.

⁷ '[S]end-boden onser herten; de kijck-vensters onses gemoeds', Junius F., *De schilder-konst der oude* (Middelburg: 1641) 282.

⁸ '[I] raggi istessi tra l'occhio, & la superficie, veduta, intenti per propria natura, & per una certa mirabile sottigliezza, benissimo convengono', Alberti L.B., *La pittura* f. 6v.

⁹ Cf. Lomazzo G.P., "Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura", in *Scritti sulle arti*, ed. R.P. Ciardi (Florence: 1973–1975) II 189; Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst* (Rotterdam: 1678) 25, 152–53, 171.

made out of *spiritus* and transferring their qualities. One example is the powers of magnetic stones; another is the melancholic spirits radiating from a shroud; likewise, someone who looks into a prostitute's mirror will be infected with wantonness: 'so great is the power of naturall things, that they not only work upon all things that are neer them, by their Vertue, but also [...] they infuse into them a like power'.¹⁰ Most prone to inimical bindings are not only weak spirits such as those of children, but also the weakest parts of man's body, which are the least corporeal and thus the most 'spiritual': the eyes. Agrippa describes *spiritus* as the substance mediating between mind and body (analogous to its mediating role between the ideal forms and their imperfect earthly reflections).¹¹ According to this idea, man transfers temperamental qualities to his surroundings when the heart forms spirits, out of diluted blood, that rise to the brain and stream out of the eyes. Just like the spirit leaves the body through the eyes, so spirits from outside find an easy entrance through this most 'transparent' part of man. The sight of an object of beauty is especially dangerous, since raising the eyebrows in admiration facilitates the entrance of malignant spirits.¹² Agrippa's formulations may be relevant to remarks of art theorists like Karel van Mander, who calls the eyes the 'mirrors of the soul', revealing man's temperamental and affective condition.¹³

For the particularly strong kind of ligation incurred by vision early modern optical theory deploys the term *fascinatio*.¹⁴ Agrippa, calling the rays of vision the 'vehicles of the spirit', describes fascination as a tool for the *magus*, to be manipulated for good as well as bad effects: 'the instrument of fascination is the spirit, viz., a certain, lucid, subtle vapour [...]. This tender spirit strikes the eyes of him that is bewitched [...] and possesseth the breast of him that is so stricken, wounds his heart,

¹⁰ Agrippa von Nettesheim H.C., *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London: 1651) I, chap. XVI, 36.

¹¹ Agrippa speaks about a 'spirit of the world, that which we call the quintessence [...] a Medium [...] by which the soul may be joined to the body'. Agrippa H.C., *Three Books* I, chap. XIV, 33.

¹² This is argued by e.g. Campanella: Seligmann S., *Die Zauberkräft des Auges* (Hamburg: 1922) 461.

¹³ Mander K. van, "Grondt der Edel-vry Schilder-const", in *Het schilder-boeck* (Haarlem: 1604) VI, para. 26–27, f. 24rv.

¹⁴ 'Fascinus tanto es como acatamiento mirando en hito.' Palencia A. de, *Vniversal vocabulario* (1490), f. CLIII, cited in Sanz Hermida J., *Cuatro tratados médicos renascentistas sobre el mal de ojo* (Salamanca: 2001) 13.

and infects his spirit [...]. So are strong ligations made'.¹⁵ Fascination gives rise to many ideas about the 'evil eye' or about diseases that are transferred just by looking. A popular object of scholarly interest well into the seventeenth century, it resulted in the genre of so-called 'fascination literature': examples are Juan Lázaro Gutiérrez's *De fascinatio opusculum* (1643) and Johann Christian Fromann's *Tractatus de fascinatione* (1674).¹⁶ These texts dwell on classical authors' emphasis, on the one hand, on the dangers of looking at certain objects, like Ovid's statement that 'the eyes that regard the wounds of someone else, are wounded themselves; many bad things transfer their damaging properties from one body to another'.¹⁷ On the other hand, the gaze appears as an important tool for transferring one's spirits to an object. Plutarch states that eye diseases are very contagious, because 'so much active power has the gaze to transfer to another person the beginning of a contagion'.¹⁸ In the same vein, Agrippa writes: 'In the vapours of the eyes there is so great a power, that they can bewitch and infect any that are near them', referring to 'certain women in Scythia, amongst the Illyrians, and Triballi' who 'killed whomsoever they looked angry upon'.¹⁹ The eleventh-century philosopher Al-Ghazali describes the *magus*' ocular power to force a camel to go inside a bathhouse, an idea still attractive to Montaigne who tells about a falconer summoning a bird to return to him just by the power of his gaze.²⁰

These examples of *fascinatio* may suggest the role of visual art in theories about the transfer of spirits from object to eye and from eye to object. Powerful ligations are made by 'charmes, strong imaginations, and images', states Agrippa.²¹ This is exemplified in the copper serpent held up by Moses, which had healing power over the onlooking Israelites. Antique literature allots a like power to effigies of divinities; Ausonius speaks about an image of an owl in the temple of Minerva on the Athenian Acropolis which, 'shining with magical paint', attracted

¹⁵ Agrippa H.C., *Three Books* I, chap. L, 146.

¹⁶ Both books are discussed in Sanz Hermida J., *Cuatro tratados*.

¹⁷ 'Dum spectant oculi laesos, laeduntur et ipsi/Multaque corporibus transitione nocent.' Ovid, *Remedia amoris* 615.

¹⁸ Plutarch, *Symposion* V.VII.331.

¹⁹ Agrippa H.C., *Three Books* I, chap. L, 146.

²⁰ '[O]culus mittit hominem in fossam, et camelum in caldarium', *Algazel's Metaphysics*, ed. J.T. Muckle (Toronto: 1933) 194; cf. Doel M.J.E. van den – Hanegraaff W.J., "Imagination", in Hanegraaff W.J. et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden: 2005) II 609; Montaigne, *Essais* I, chap. XX.

²¹ Agrippa H.C., *Three Books* I, chap. XL, 79.

birds that were then killed by a ray of lightning.²² Strong projective qualities are not only attributed to the eyes of the beholder. The work of art is also thought to ‘beam out’ powerful spirits into the spectator’s eyes. The assumption that beholders are thus affectively ‘moved’ to take over the qualities of the objects they look at, appears central to the common art theoretical notion that images infuse ‘by their Vertue [...] a like power’ in the spectator, who is overcome with hunger or drowsiness when looking at paintings of respectively eating or sleeping figures, and feels in his own body the wounds of a depicted martyr.²³

The Alchemical View: Painting and Transubstantiation

Most art theory is not as explicit as Agrippa on the ‘binding’ power of objects. The comparison between painting and magic, however, is a popular commonplace. Franciscus Junius states that painting deceives the spectator ‘as if it were magic’.²⁴ Painters as diverse as Caravaggio and Gerard Dou are praised for the ‘fascinating’ qualities of their works; Dou would wield his brush like a magic wand.²⁵ The Dutch theorist Philips Angel speaks about the ‘fascinating power’ that arises from a potent clair-obscur,²⁶ and according to Samuel van Hoogstraten painting gives many onlookers ‘the impression of a supernatural

²² ‘[H]ic clari viguere Menecratis artes/Atque Ephesi spectata manus vel in arce Minervae/Ictinus, magico cui noetua perlita fuco/Allicit omne genus volucres perimitque tuendo’, Ausonius, *Mosella* 310.

²³ ‘[A] picture artificially expressing the true naturall motions, will (surely) procure laughter when it laugheth [...] cause the beholder to wonder, when it wondereth, [...] to have an appetite when he seeth it eating of dainties; to fall a sleepe at the sight of a sweete-sleeping picture [etc.]’, Lomazzo G.P., *A tracte containing the artes of curious Paintinge Caruinge & Buildinge... Englished by R[ichard] H[aydocke]* (Oxford: 1598) II, chap. 1, 1–2; cf. Scribanus’s remark about a Saint Sebastian by Coxie: ‘et spectatores vulneris dolorem sentiunt’, Scribanus S., *Antverpia* (Antwerp: 1610) 39.

²⁴ ‘[O]ns verstandt als het waere beguychelen’, Junius F., *Schilder-konst* 43; cf. Goeree W., *Natuurlyk en Schilderkonstig Ontwerp der Menschkunde* (Amsterdam: 1682) 337f.

²⁵ Gaspare Murtola on Caravaggio’s *Fortune Teller* (1603): ‘Non so qual sia più maga/o la donna, che fingi,/O tu che la dipingi’; Traudenius on Dou: ‘Dou schildert niet, ô neen, hy goochelt met’t penseel’, *Rijmbundel* (1662) 17, both quotations in Kwak Z., ‘“Taste the Fare and Chew it with Your Eyes”: A Painting by Pieter Pietersz and the Amusing Deceit in 16th- and 17th-century Dutch and Flemish Kitchen Scenes’, in Van Houdt T. (ed.), *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the Early Modern Period*, Intersections 2 (Leiden: 2002) 223–251, 247, 249.

²⁶ ‘[T]ooverachtige kracht’, Angel Ph., *Lof der Schilder-konst* (Leiden: 1642) 39.

power'.²⁷ An artwork may be praised in stating that it is 'not painting but magic'; Marco Boschini compares in particular the illusionistic effect of loose brushwork with witchcraft (*strigarie*).²⁸

Art theory deals most literally with spiritual transfer in the numerous anecdotes praising painters for their alchemical skills. Here historical fact and biographical fiction merge; Vasari compares Jan van Eyck to an alchemist, and his invention of the oil medium would have been a result of his enduring interest in chemistry.²⁹ Likewise, Lomazzo describes the achievement of Venetian painters who worked in the relatively new oil medium as 'alchemy'.³⁰ The art of Northern Italy was most conspicuously identified with alchemy, as well as that of the Netherlands: its focus on the material skills connected to *colorito* (colouring) instead of on the more cerebral *disegno* (drawing), combined with its use of a suspect new medium such as oil, made it prone to criticism borrowed from the alchemical discourse. But art literature also describes related experiments by Piero di Cosimo and Parmigianino.³¹ Von Sandrart recounts how a famous alchemist came to Rubens's studio, boasting about his almost completed efforts to arrive at the gold-creating tincture. Rubens answered that the man had arrived too late, because he had already found 'by brush and colours the true Lapidem Philosophicum' twenty years before.³²

Von Sandrart's comparison between pictorial and alchemical skills was not just an anecdote: he includes *tinctoria*, the mixture of chemicals, in an illustration listing various pictorial skills.³³ Other art theorists like Benedetto Varchi and Lodovico Dolce wrote separate publications

²⁷ '[E]nige overnatuurlijke kracht', Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 357.

²⁸ Boschini M., *La carta del navegar pitoresco*, ed. A. Pallucchini (Venice-Rome: 1966) 327; cf. 'Questa no xe Pitura, l'è magia,/Che incanta le persone che la vede', idem 207.

²⁹ 'Giovanni da Bruggia [...] si mise [...] come quello che si diletta dell'archimia, a far di molti olj pe[r] far vernici', Vasari G., *Le vite* I, book 2, 375.

³⁰ '[L]'alchimia de i pittori Venetiani', Lomazzo G.P., *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura* (Milan: 1584) 191.

³¹ Vasari G., *Le vite* I, book 2, 439; cf. Grasman E., "L'Alchimista Parmigianino nelle Vite del Vasari", *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* XLVI, 2 (1985) 87–101; Armenini G.B., *De' veri precetti della pittura* (Ravenna: 1587) I, book 1, 16.

³² Sandrart J. von, *Teutsche Academie der edlen Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey Künste* (Nuremberg: 1675) I, book III, 283; cf. Doel M.J.E. van den, 'Nach den Regeln wolgegründete Naturlichkeit'. *Opvattingen over kunst van Joachim von Sandrart (1606–1688)* (MA Thesis, University of Amsterdam: 2000) 106.

³³ Sandrart J. von, *Teutsche Academie* I, book III, 59.

about alchemy and about the various ‘qualities’ of colours.³⁴ More than anecdotic is Van Mander’s account of Hendrik Goltzius’s alchemical activities, related to the ‘purification of pigments’, that is corroborated by other sources.³⁵ Painters too modelled an artistic *persona* on their kinship to alchemists, as did Luca Giordano in his self-portrait, holding a large retort (ca. 1660).³⁶ These examples may illustrate the involvement of painting in what has been called the nascent ‘chemical world view’.³⁷ Like alchemy, painting was an art with a status in between craftsmanship and the ‘liberal’, more intellectual arts; but it was also suspect because of its inherent deceit and its ambition to make money out of the skilful mixture of materials.³⁸ The period appreciation of alchemy is characterised by a ‘tension between the glorification of human power and the condemnation of human pride’. This tension is also present in art literature, which extols the godlike, creative powers of the painter, but stresses the vanity of his deceitful efforts as well.³⁹

A closer scrutiny of the biographical material reveals how the comparison between painting and alchemy is determined by the discourse on *spiritus*. The painters mentioned are praised for one common artistic skill: the rendering of human skin. The ability to change lifeless pigments into living flesh is most directly comparable to the alchemical process of transubstantiation. Many examples in art literature describe

³⁴ Varchi B., *Questione sull'alchimia* (Florence: 1544); Dolce L., *Dialogo [...] nel quale si ragiona delle qualità, diuersità, e proprietà, de i colori* (Venice: 1565).

³⁵ '[I]n de kennis der Natuere, als natuerlijck Philosoph, niet onervaren', Mander K. Van, "Het leven der doorluchtighe nederlandsche en hooghduytsche schilders", in *Het schilder-boeck* (Haarlem: 1604) f. 286v; cf. 'Addictus fuit philosophiae naturali et chymicis quoque se occupavit, ut colorum pulchritudinem extraheret et pigmenta purgaret', Buchelius A., *Vitae eruditorum Belgicorum*, ms. UB Utrecht, No. 838, ff. 270v–271r; cf. Leeflang H. – Luijten G., *Hendrick Goltzius*, cat. exh. Amsterdam-New York-Toledo (Zwolle: 2003) 20.

³⁶ Painting in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan; cf. Ferino-Pagden S. et al., *Parmigianino e la pratica dell'alchimia*, cat. exh. Casalmaggiore, Centro Culturale Santa Chiara (Milan: 2003) 122–124.

³⁷ This term is connected in particular to Paracelsus, who was read by authors like Van Hoogstraten; cf. Principe L.M. – DeWitt L., *Transmutations: Alchemy in Art. Selected Works from the Eddleman and Fisher Collections at the Chemical Heritage Foundation* (Philadelphia: 2002) 4; cf. Smith P.H., *The Body of the Artisan. Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: 2004), and Swan C., *Art, Science and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629)* (Cambridge: 2005).

³⁸ Thus Paolo Pino mentions how the deceitful craft of the painters Apollodorus and Zeuxis has brought them wealth, they are 'divenuti abundant di ricchezze con la vera alchimia della pittura', Pino P., *Dialogo di pittura* (Venice: 1548) f. 22r.

³⁹ Principe L.M. – DeWitt L., *Transmutations* 7; on painting as deceit cf. Kwak Z., "Taste the fare...", and Weststeijn T., *De Zichtbare Wereld*, chap. VI.

this process:⁴⁰ Dolce states that Titian's skills in colouring ensure that 'his every figure is alive, it moves, and its flesh pulsates (*le carni tremano*)'. Pordenone reputedly remarked that Titian seemed to have used in a certain nude 'flesh instead of paint'.⁴¹ Dutch literature especially praises Rembrandt for his skills in flesh colour;⁴² likewise De Piles compares Rembrandt and Titian because of their respective skills in the rendering of 'carnations'.⁴³ The Dutch poet Joost van den Vondel lauds Titian and Rembrandt's pupil Govert Flinck with the same trope, asking rhetorically: 'Who creates out of paint this flesh and skin?'⁴⁴ The painter's ability to render incarnate eventually leads to the popular comparison of paint with blood.⁴⁵

The descriptions of the difficulty of suggesting living flesh are closely linked to the discourses on *incarnazione*, alchemy, and the infusion of *spiritus* into lifeless objects. As Taylor observes, Dutch art theory pays special attention to the painter's efforts to make incarnate 'glow' or *gloeyend*, referring to the rendering of the sanguine 'spirits' that actually flow *beneath* the surface of the skin.⁴⁶ This 'bringing pigments to life' in the rendering of skin involves a specific mindset. When the artist succeeds he will stir the bodily *spiritus* of the beholder, analogous to the heating of his own creative spirits through the sight of his model's beauty.

Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* explains the 'inflammation' of the blood caused by the sight of the object of one's desire. This book was well known to art theorists in the North.⁴⁷ In a discussion of what hap-

⁴⁰ Cf. Bohde D., *Haut, Fleisch und Farbe. Körperlichkeit und Materialität in den Gemälden Tizians* (Emsdetten-Berlin: 2002).

⁴¹ '[L]a gloria del perfetto colorire [...] onde ogni sua figura è viva, si muove, e le carni tremano'; 'che Titiano in quel nudo habbia posto carne, e non colori'; Dolce L., *L'Aretino*, ed. M.W. Roskill (New York: 1968) 54, 51.

⁴² Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 228.

⁴³ Piles R. De, *Abregé de la vie des peintres* (Paris: 1699) 437.

⁴⁴ On a Magdalen by Titian: 'Gij ziet geen verf, maar levend fleis', Vondel J. van den, *Volledige dichtwerken en oorspronkelijk proza*, ed. A. Verwey (Amsterdam: 1937) 942; cf. 'Wie schept uit verf dit vlees en vel', idem 946.

⁴⁵ Cf. Weber G.J.M., *Der Lobtopos des 'lebenden' Bildes. Jan Vos und sein 'Zeege der Schilderkunst' von 1654* (Hildesheim: 1991) 152.

⁴⁶ Taylor P., 'The Glow in Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings', *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 11 (1998) 159–178. Cf. Vondel on a painting of a *Sleeping Venus* by Philips Koninck: 'Men ziet 't bloed gezond door 't blanke vel heengloeien', Vondel J. van den, *Volledige dichtwerken* 947.

⁴⁷ It was translated into Dutch partly in 1639 and entirely in 1662 and 1675; for direct references see Mander K. van, "Grondt" IV, para. 37, f. 14v and Junius F., *Schilder-kunst*, introduction, vi.

pens when the lover confronts his beloved, Castiglione describes the eyes as the entrance for spiritual rays from outside. When those rays mingle with the lover's bodily spirits they make him or her receptive to the beloved's image. Then

vital spirits [...] penetrate [through the eyes] naturally to the heart [...] and, mingling with those other spirits dwelling there, and with the very subtle kind of blood which these have in them, they infect the blood near the heart [...] and they make it like themselves, and ready to receive the impression of that image which they have brought with them.⁴⁸

The sight of the beloved ultimately leads to the 'impression' of his or her image in the lover's heart, the seat of the sanguine spirits. Various poems on paintings describe the literally warming effect attributed to this process. Vondel writes that Philips Koninck in depicting a *Sleeping Venus* has 'kindled and lit the fire of art lovers, by means of living flesh, and not paint, that was artfully laid on the canvas'.⁴⁹ Elsewhere, he states that a painted Venus sets everybody's hearts on fire and needs no torches, arrows, bows or other arms to warm their passions.⁵⁰

Vondel's descriptions of paintings clarify further how the painter's heated blood is responsible for the effect of the artwork on the beholder. He states that for an image of Saint Susanna the painter's 'spirit' has 'lit' his brush by the 'sparks' that are produced in the confrontation with his beautiful model. These sparks are then able to set the spectator's 'inflammable blood' (*'t ontvonkbre bloed*) on fire.⁵¹ The poem stresses the importance of the artist's mental faculties, speaking about the 'painter's spirit' or *schildergeest* that gives form to matter. Likewise, the playwright Jan Vos writes that the painter 'blows life, by means of his spirit (*geest*),

⁴⁸ '[V]ivi spirti [...] entrando anchor negli occhi [...] naturalmente penetrano al core [...] & ivi si confondono con quegli altri spirti, & con quella sottilissima natura di sangue, che hanno seco: infettano il sangue vicino al core, [...] & fannolo à se simile, & atto à ricevere la impression di quella imagine, che seco hanno portata', Castiglione B., *Il libro del cortegiano* (Venice: 1528) III 180.

⁴⁹ '[O]m door zulk een middel 't vier/Des kunstbeminners meer t'ontvonken en ontsteeken/Door levend vleesch, geen verf, met kunst op doek gestreken', Vondel J. van den, *Volledige dichtwerken* 946.

⁵⁰ Cf. Vondel, on Koninck's *Sleeping Venus*, in *Volledige dichtwerken* 947.

⁵¹ 'De schildergeest [...] Naardien hij zijn penseel ontvonkte aan de zonnestralen/Van ogen, daar de Min hem levende uit verscheen', in "Op een Italiaanse schilderij van Susanne", Vondel J. van den, *Volledige dichtwerken* 943; cf. Sluijter E.J., *Rembrandt and the Female Nude* (Amsterdam: 2006) 358–362.

into dead paint', and that it is difficult to pay tribute to this 'transubstantiating' skill with a material reward.⁵²

The transubstantiating aspects of colouring return, in the Dutch *paragone* between colour and drawing, as arguments in favour of colour as the most 'spiritual' and therefore superior skill. Thereby the Dutch debate reverses the traditional preference for 'formative' drawing above 'material' colouring: Van Hoogstraten calls colour the 'spirit and soul' of the art of painting, and compares it to the fire that Prometheus stole from the Gods in order to make living statues.⁵³

The associations of colours with fire, warmth and life echo a contemporary scientific discourse. Literature on chemistry construes differences in colour as a function of chemical reactions. Robert Boyle contrasts the Platonic explanation of colour as 'a Kind of Flame consisting of Minute Corpuscles as it were Darted by the Object against the Eye' to the opinion of modern 'chymists' that colours are functions of salt, sulphur, or mercury.⁵⁴ Antique sculptors are reported to have expressed different emotions in one statue by using a mixture of differently coloured metals, equivalent to the mixture of bodily spirits: this is explained from the notion that affective states are a function of material processes such as the heating and cooling of blood.⁵⁵ According to Aristotle, Daedalus sculpted an image of Venus, filled with mercury, which could even express its passions through speech.⁵⁶

Mindful of the artist's ability to infuse life into objects, Petrarch calls on Pygmalion's powers to make orators so persuasive that artworks will answer to their words.⁵⁷ This fusion of the realms of art and oratory is illustrative of the importance of what may be described as the 'colour metaphor' in rhetoric. Rhetorical theory speaks about the orator's powers to conjure up living images before his audience by means of 'rhetorical colours' or 'lights' (*colores rhetorici* and *lumina orationis*).⁵⁸ The

⁵² 'Hier blaast hy leeven, door zyn geest, in doode verwen', 'wie verf tot menschen vormt is quaalik te betaalen', Vos J., *Alle de gedichten* I 376, I 308.

⁵³ 'Wanneer de Teykenkonst als 't lichaem wort gepreezen,/Zoo moet de Schilderkonst de geest en ziele weezen,/Het hemels vuer gelijk, dat in Prometheus beeld/Het leeven eerst ontstak', Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 217, see also Mander K. van, "Grondt" XII, para. 1, f. 46v.

⁵⁴ Boyle R., *Experiments and Considerations Touching Colours* (London: 1664) 84–85.

⁵⁵ Mander K. van, "Grondt" VI, para. 56f., f. 27v. Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 112, 358.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima* 1:3.

⁵⁷ *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, ed. R.M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: 1976) 78.

⁵⁸ Cf. Cicero, *De Oratore* iii.xl.161, and Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* viii.v.34.

orator is advised to 'inflame' his audience's spirits with this 'painterly' power that renders the *vis verborum* its magical potency.⁵⁹ Thus Henry Wotton's *The Elements of Architecture* (1672) compares the painter's colouristic prowess with rhetorical persuasion: 'as in the art of perswasion [...] likewise, the Sight must be sweetly deceived by an insensible passage, from brighter colours to dimmer'.⁶⁰

Echoing the theory of rhetoric, art theory states that colouring and especially clair-obscur contribute to painting's 'eloquent' powers to address the public.⁶¹ De Piles writes that '[u]n tableau dont le dessin et les couleurs locales sont médiocres mais qui sont soutenues par l'artifice du clair-obscur, ne laissera pas passer tranquillement son spectateur, il l'appellera, il l'arrêtera du moins quelque temps'.⁶² In De Piles's account, Rembrandt's portrait of his maidservant, which persuaded the beholders to speak to her, exemplifies these powers [compare Fig. 2]. The biographer Arnold Houbraken tells that one of Rembrandt's self-portraits was executed with such a 'forceful' brushwork that it 'seemed to talk to the spectators'.⁶³ Houbraken appears to echo Vasari's remark that 'a magical touch of the brush transmutes pallid images into living and speaking figures'.⁶⁴

The similarities between artistic and rhetorical theories are manifold. It suffices here to remark that the alleged spiritual character of seeing presupposes a direct relation between sight, the imagination, and the affects. The focus on the 'transforming' power of painting clarifies how the *spiritus* of sight are a mediating substance in the process from matter to form, analogous to their mediating function between mind and body. Vision has an impact on man's body and soul, and may procure, just like oratory, a lasting change in character. This explains not only the dangers of painting, especially those presented by lascivious images, but also the role art can play in society.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ward J.O., "Magic and Rhetorica from Antiquity to the Renaissance: Some Ruminations", *Rhetorica* 6,1 (1988) 57–118.

⁶⁰ Wotton H., *The Elements of Architecture* (London: 1672) 52.

⁶¹ Cf. 'Zeuxis, Polygnotus, ende Euphranor hebben met eenen sonderlingen arbeyd ghesocht haer stucken behoorelicker wijze te beschaduwen ende met eenen levendighen gheest in te assemen', Junius F., *Schilder-konst* 264.

⁶² Piles R. De, *Cours de peinture par principes* (Paris: 1708) 301.

⁶³ '[Z]oo konstig en kragtig [...] ja het hoofd scheen [...] de aanschouwers aan te spreken', Houbraken A., *De groote schouburg* (Amsterdam: 1718–1721) I 269.

⁶⁴ '[T]occo magico di pennello che tramuta le smorte immagini in figure vive e parlanti'; Vasari is allegedly speaking about himself. Bottari has added this passage to the Roman edition of the *Lives*; see Vasari G., *Le Vite*, ed. G. Milanesi (Firenze: 1906) VII 724.



Fig. 2. Rembrandt, *Maid servant*, signed and dated 1651, oil on canvas, 78 × 64 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum.

Seeing and the Spirit: Painting and Love Lyric

The idea that colours persuade their beholders, and that the object of vision as it were forces its image onto the spectator, corresponds to the Aristotelian view that seeing is a matter of spiritual transfer from object to viewer. In the debate on the direction of ocular rays, art theory discusses the contrary stand as well. Gian Paolo Lomazzo appears ultimately in favour of the opinion that the eye sends out rays, concurring with Plato who 'thinketh [vision] is caused from that brightnes, which proceedeth from the eie';⁶⁵ Lomazzo concludes that 'the Beames of the sight [...] are those which going forth of the eie, doe apprehend all the particularities of the obiects to be painted'.⁶⁶

Lomazzo's formulation, that the eyes 'beam forth' light, can be explained through the supposed relation between sight and the emission of heated bodily spirits. As described in the *Timaeus*, the eyes were deemed infested with 'so much of fire as would not burn, but gave a gentle light [...] to flow through the eyes in a stream smooth and dense'.⁶⁷ This fiery character lies at the heart of a literary metaphor from antiquity, that the eyes of someone very passionate lance rays of lightning.⁶⁸ When the passions are cooled, the ocular light diminishes; Shakespeare describes a battle scene, in which spirits leave the body of the slain and 'dying eyes gleam'd forth their ashly lights'.⁶⁹ These lights may also be transferred to someone or something else. According to early modern 'fascination literature', looking at an object means infecting it with one's spirit. An intense spiritual transfer may occur, similar to the moment of artistic transubstantiation when painters give life to pigments.

Love lyric, rich in ocular symbolism, is explicit about the spiritual infection of the gaze. Artists were aware of this symbolism through emblem books and Ripa's *Iconologia*. In an entry on 'The Origin of Love', Ripa refers to the Greek poet Musaeus, who was first to explore love's foundation in vision.⁷⁰ Zaratino Castellini made an addition to

⁶⁵ Lomazzo G.P., *A tracte* V, chap. 3, 191.

⁶⁶ Lomazzo G.P., *A tracte* V, chap. 5, 195.

⁶⁷ *Timaeus* 45; cf. Deonna W., *Symbolisme de l'oeil* 251–300.

⁶⁸ *Iliad* XII, 466, cf. 'Terribilis gemino de lumine fulgurat ignis', Silius Italicus, *Punica* VI.220.

⁶⁹ *The Rape of Lucrece* II.1378.

⁷⁰ Ripa C., *Iconologia of Uijtbeeldinghen des Verstants* (Amsterdam: 1644) 386, referring to Propertius, Ovid and Petrarch.

the Italian and Dutch editions of this entry, quoting from Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium* that describes in detail how spirits may beam forth from the eyes.⁷¹ When these spirits reach their object, they may penetrate it through its weakest point, the eyes:

Just like this vapour from the blood, that we call the spirit [*spirito* in Italian; *geest* in Dutch, TW] [...] is of the same nature as the blood, it beams forth from the eyes as through glass windows, in rays with the same quality as the blood [...]; our body's heart, by an enduring movement, thus affects the blood of anyone who is near, and from [the object's eyes] it dilutes the spirits throughout the entire body, and through those same spirits it sends out glowing sparks, permeating all parts of the body.

Castellini states that 'the light of the spirit shines most strongly through the eyes [...] which have in them light, glow, vapours and sparks'. He compares their powers to piercing arrows:

So it is no wonder that an open eye, which is directed at somebody with great discernment, shoots its arrow-rays into the eyes of the one that looks at it: when those rays penetrate the eyes of a confronting Lover they pierce his heart [...] thus hearts are wounded by the heart that shoots arrows.⁷²

This Ficinian theory of love, supposing action at a distance between lover and beloved, has been described as 'ocular love-making'.⁷³ It gave

⁷¹ Cf. Ficino M., *El libro dell'amore*, manuscript 1469, ed. S. Niccoli (Firenze: 1987) orat. 7, chap. 4, 2. This passage was probably the inspiration for Agrippa's and Castiglione's notions on the subject.

⁷² In the translation of D. Pietersz Pers: 'gelijckerwijs dese damp van 't bloed, die wy den geest noemen [...] soodanigh is, als t'bloed is, soo schiet het oock door de oogen, als door de glaese vensteren, gelijcke straelen die 't bloed gelijck zijn [...] En also beroert oock 't herte van onse lichaem, door een gestaedige beweginge, het bloed, van die daer nae by is, en van daer spreyt het de geesten door 't gantsche lichaem, en door dieselve geesten verspreyt het de glinsterende voncken, door alle de leeden, [...] 't licht van den geest glinstert aldermeest door de oogen [...], in sich hebbende licht, glants, dampen en viervoncken [...] Soo is't dan geen wonder, dat een open oogh, met groot opmercken op iemant gestiert, de pijlen van zijne straelen schiet in de oogen, van die 't oogh beschout: welcke straelen door de oogen van haere tegen-Minnaers schietende, dringen door tot in't herte toe van dese ellendige Minnaers: [...] zy zijn gewont van 't herte, dat de pijlen werpt', Ripa C., *Iconologia* 384. Castellini's addition was first made in 1613. For earlier discussions of this passage cf. Hooft P.C., *Emblemata amatoria*, ed. K. Porteman (Leiden 1983) 166–168 and Sluijter E.J., "'Les regards dards': Werner van den Valckert's *Venus and Cupid*", in Golahny A. – Mochizuki M.M. – Vergara L. (eds.), *In His Miheu: Essays on Netherlandish Art In Memory of John Michael Montias* (Amsterdam: 2006) 423–440.

⁷³ Moffitt J.F., *Caravaggio in Context: Learned Naturalism and Renaissance Humanism* (Jefferson: 2004) 175.

rise to rich symbolism in emblem literature describing the beloved's gaze with the metaphor of a consummating fire. Otto Vaenius' *Amorum emblemata* states that just as the food in a cooking pot is heated by external fire, the heart inside the lover's body is 'consummated and annihilated/by the rays of his [female] Beloved, that dart forth from her eyes'.⁷⁴ Vaenius depicts how the lover is hit by arrows darting from the eyes of the object of his love [Fig. 3].⁷⁵ This notion of ocular communication leads to the idea that by impeding the sight of a man or animal one immediately takes his or its power away; Pliny describes how a lion can be caught by throwing something over the eyes because 'all his power is concentrated in his eyes', an anecdote which returns in Jacob Cats's emblem *captis oculis, capitur bellua* [Fig. 4].⁷⁶

The qualities of the beloved's gaze are also discussed in art literature, which ascribes the power to spiritually influence the beholder to depictions of beautiful people. The *Anthologia Graeca* tells of an Eros by Praxiteles whose 'eyes lance charms, not with his arrows, but only with his gaze'.⁷⁷ An argument in the *paragone* in favour of painting above sculpture is its ability to represent the 'gracious sight of black and blue eyes, with the splendour of those amorous rays (*raggi amorosi*)', as Castiglione states.⁷⁸ In a poem on a painting of Venus and Cupid, Vondel explains that Cupid is blindfolded to avoid the arrows from the goddess' eyes.⁷⁹ This trope is visualised in depictions of Venus, looking at the spectator, accompanied by Cupid aiming his dart [compare Fig. 5].

Another popular commonplace states that the painted figure does *not* look at the beholder, because if she would (usually it is a she), her seductive powers would be too great. According to Pausanias, the statue of 'Aphrodite Morphe' not only wore chains about its feet to impede it from walking, but its face was also covered by a veil to prevent too

⁷⁴ 'In een ghesloten pot, al comt het vier van buyten,/Syn sap, en vochtigheyt van binnen wel versiet:/In 'sminnaers lijf sijn hert verteert, en gaet te niet,/Door stralen van sijn Lief, die wt haer ooghen spruyten', Vaenius O., *Amorum emblemata* (Antwerpen: 1608) 96.

⁷⁵ On this image cf. Sluijter E.J., "Les regards dards".

⁷⁶ '[O]mnis vis constat in oculis', Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* VIII.XXI.54.

⁷⁷ *Anthologia Graeca*, ed. Beckby (Munich: 1958) XVI.204.

⁷⁸ 'Questo far non pò già il marmoraro, né meno esprimer la graziosa vista degli occhi neri e azzurri, col splendor di que' raggi amorosi', Castiglione B., *Il libro del cortegiano* 126.

⁷⁹ '[I]k ken geen pylen dan de blikken die in dit hooge voorhoofd staan', Vondel J., "Geertruidt Huidekoopers", cited in Weber G.F., *Der Lobtopos des 'lebenden' Bildes* 222.



Fig. 3. ‘Amor, ut lacryma, ex oculis oritur, in pectus cadit’, in Otto Vaenius, *Amorum emblemata* (Antwerp: 1608) 76.

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CAPTIS OCVLIS, CAPITVR BELLVA.

X.



OVID. **N**on bene conveniunt, nec in una sede morantur.
 METAM. 3. *Majestas & amor.*

MANTVAN.

Quisquis amat, servit; sequitur captivus amatam,
 Fers domitâ cervice jugum, fert dulcia tergo
 Verbera, fert stimulos, trahit & bovis instar aratrum.
 Verwon-

Fig. 4. 'Captis oculis, capitur bellua', in Jacob Cats, *Sinne- en Minnebeelden* (Rotterdam: 1627) X.A.1.1.



Fig. 5. Werner van den Valckert, *Venus and Cupid*, ca. 1612–14, oil on panel, 103 × 77 cm. USA, private collection.

great a power over the beholders.⁸⁰ Vos writes about Jacob Bakker's painting of a sleeping nymph that 'she is already burning us [by her beauty] while she is asleep; when she wakes, she will turn us entirely to ashes: because the eye sets fire to the heart'.⁸¹ Art theorist Willem Goeree tells that a painting of a sleeping Venus bore the inscription that the goddess should not be awoken, lest her gaze seduce the beholder to remain forever in the virtual reality evoked by the artist. He concludes 'that there is a Charming Power which beams forth from the eyes', a power which when it reaches its object is 'as it were drunk in through the Eyes; and when it creeps in through those open Windows, penetrates to our Heart's core'.⁸²

The assumption that objects emit tiny spiritual 'images', or *effigies tenues* replicating them,⁸³ leads to the imaginative etymology that relates *pupilla* (pupil) to 'little puppet': the eyes putatively contain little *homunculi* that through the act of looking enter someone else's eyes in order to start their malefic workings. The little figures can easily be discerned by looking someone closely in the eye.⁸⁴ A contrary effect is described in John Donne's poem 'Witchcraft by a picture': the poet describes how his beloved keeps his effigy, his *pupilla*, captured in her eye in constant torment: 'I fix my eye on thine, and there/Pity my picture burning in thine eye'.⁸⁵

A Biblical symbology accompanies the love lyric view. The *Song of Songs* states, for instance, that the lover's heart was 'wounded' by one of the beloved's eyes.⁸⁶ The popularity of the story of David and Bathsheba in Dutch literature and art is apparently related to the contemporary

⁸⁰ Pausanias, *Attika* III.15.10.

⁸¹ '[Z]y brandt ons nu zy slaapt; indien zy wakker wardt, Zoo maakt z'ons heel tot asch: want 't oog ontsteekt het hart', Vos J., *Alle de gedichten* (Amsterdam: 1726) I 336; cf. Sluijter E.J. – Spaans N. "Door liefde verstandig of door lust verteerd? Relaties tussen tekst en beeld in voorstellingen van Cimon en Efigenia" *De zeventiende eeuw* 17, 3 (2001) 75–103, en Sluijter, *Rembrandt* 150.

⁸² 'Dus stelde seker Konstenaer onder een slapende Venus een Opschrift, waar in hy de Beschouwers vermaande haar niet wakker te maken, op datse door 't openen van haar Oogen, de hare niet sluyten en mogt [...] een Betoooverende Kragt [straalt] van de [ogen]: de Liefde [...] [wordt] door de Oogen gelijk als ingedronken [...]; En [dringt], insluypende door die open Vensteren, tot het binnenste van onses Herten', Goeree W., *Natuurlyk en Schilderkonstig Ontwerp der Menschkunde* (Amsterdam: 1682) 116.

⁸³ '[E]ffigies quoque debent mittere tenues res quaeque', Lucrece, *De rerum natura* IV.82 cf. 95, 103, 151.

⁸⁴ Deonna W., *Symbolisme de l'Oeil* 30–34; Seligmann S., *Zauberkraft* 249.

⁸⁵ Donne J., *The Love Poems of John Donne* (London: 1937) lxi.

⁸⁶ 'Vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum tuorum', *Canticum canticorum* 4:9.

discourse on the power of vision and the charms of physical beauty.⁸⁷ Referring to this story, the poet Jan de Brune describes how ‘covetousness came through the eyes into David’s Heart’, quoting in Italian ‘*S’occhio non mira, cor non sospira* (if the eye does not see, the heart does not sigh)’.⁸⁸ A painting by Willem Drost confronts the spectator with a similar warning: here Bathsheba does not seem to be embarrassed by the letter she has received from the king, but broodingly looks the beholder into the eye, displaying her body [Fig. 6]. In a similar way Rembrandt depicts Saint Susanna, not looking at her aggressors, but at the spectator [Fig. 7].⁸⁹

The iconography of Medusa, most famously painted by Caravaggio, suggests that ocular rays are not only seductive, but also have truly malefic effects [Fig. 8]. If this image, painted on a shield-like shape, was intended to hang above a doorway or in another elevated position, it would have looked down menacingly on the spectator. Descriptions of Medusa, painted or real, relate how her eyes are, not unlike the lover’s, ‘burning’ with a spiritual fire.⁹⁰ The effect of her gaze, however, reverses the artistic power to transfer lifeless material into flesh: she draws the ‘blood’ and ‘spirit’ from the object of her sight, as Giambattista Marino describes.⁹¹ Eulogies on Cellini’s sculpture of *Perseus*, brandishing Medusa’s head, state that the spectators were ‘stoned’ by her gaze and gaped in numb amazement at such a lifelike work of art.⁹² Huygens praises a Medusa painted by Rubens for its lifelikeness (*vividitas*), but states that he would not like to keep it in his own house. Apparently because of its ability to ‘strike the spectator with horror’; the image was kept behind a curtain, only to be revealed at specific

⁸⁷ See Sluiter E.J., *Rembrandt* 358–361.

⁸⁸ ‘[B]egeerlikheid, die door d’oogen in Davids hart quam’, Brune J. de, *Wetsteen der vernuften* (Rotterdam: 1994, 1644–1), 276f.; cf. Ripa C., *Iconologia* 389; Sluiter E.J., *Seductress of Sight: Studies in Dutch art of the Golden Age* (Zwolle: 2000) 13 ff.

⁸⁹ Vondel extols the ocular powers of Susanna in a poem “Op een Italiaanse schilderij van Susanne”, Vondel J. van den, *Volledige dichtwerken* 94.

⁹⁰ ‘[T]’effect [...] van t’hoofd van Medusa: [...] vyer uyt den ooghen’, Mander K. Van, “Het Leven der Moderne, oft dees-tijtsche doorluchtighe Italiaensche Schilders”, in *Het schilder-boeck* (Haarlem: 1604) f. 122v; ‘occhi infiammati’, Cartari V., *Le imagini [...] de i Dei* (Venice: 1556) f. LXXIXr; ‘Lumina Gorgoneo saevius igne micant’, Ovid, *Ars amatoria* III.503; cf. ‘ses yeux étincellent d’un feu plus ardent que celui de yeux de la Gorgone’, Montaigne, *Essais* II, chap. XXXI.

⁹¹ ‘[N]ovo Gorgon lasciato essangue/m’avea di spirto e sangue’, Marino, *La Galeria*, ed. M. Pieri (Padova: 1979, 1619–1) I 169.

⁹² Shearman J., *Only connect... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: 1992) 44ff., 55ff.



Fig. 6. Willem Drost, *Bathsheba*, signed and dated 1654, oil on canvas, 101 × 86 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre. (C) Photo RMN / © Jean-Gilles Berizi.



Fig. 7. Rembrandt, *Susanna and the Elders*, signed and dated 1647, oil on panel, 77 × 93 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.



Fig. 8. Caravaggio, *Medusa*, ca. 1597, oil on canvas mounted on wood, 60 × 55 cm. Florence, Uffizi.

moments.⁹³ For the same reasons, perhaps, Cardinal Del Monte gave Caravaggio's painting to the Archduke of Tuscany; Marino described the gift of this painting in terms of a transfer of Medusa's powers.⁹⁴

The damaging power of ocular rays, comparable to the maleficent working of the 'evil eye', is illustrated in representations of 'dangerous women' who broodingly stare at the spectator after committing a violent act, such as in Caravaggio's *Salome* or Rubens's *Judith* [Figs. 9–10]. Other examples are Jan de Bray's depiction of Jael after killing Sisera and a less menacing, even inviting portrait of this Biblical heroine by Johann Spilberg [Figs. 11 and 12]. The pictorial tradition is in keeping with texts stressing the ocular powers of these Old Testament women. Jacob Cats writes that Judith, using the 'stratagem' of her eyes, seduced first the guards and then the Assyrians' leader, Holofernes: 'The moment he looked, he died'.⁹⁵

Rays To and From the Work of Art

Not only artworks made with persuasive prowess, but also eyes in the act of vision, are thought to emit spirits. The alchemical and amorous discourses apparently complement the view, expressed by Agrippa, that all beings and objects affect each other through spiritual rays. Vision, indeed, constitutes a particularly powerful kind of 'binding' since it consists in a reciprocal transfer. On the one hand, art literature describes how an artwork's qualities may affectively change its spectators. On the other hand, the ultimate transformation of lifeless pigments into living flesh requires an additional act of the beholder's imagination. The alleged two-way movement of visual rays sheds some light on the early modern understanding of creativity and artistic experience.

Art literature borrows directly from love lyric when it ascribes 'charming' powers to painting and introduces 'Pictura' as a beautiful woman who seduces artists and beholders alike. In Van Hoogstraten's treatise, the Muses appear as 'enchantresses (*Tooveressen*)', 'seductresses' and

⁹³ '[S]ubito terrore perculsum spectatorem (velari nempe tabella solet)', Huygens C., *Fragment eener autobiografie*, ed. A. Worp (s.l.: s.a.) 73.

⁹⁴ '[L]a vera Medusa è il valor vostro', Marino G., *La Galleria*, ed. M. Pieri (Padova: 1979, 1619–1) I 31–32.

⁹⁵ 'Eodem stratagemate Iuditha primo vigiles, mox Imperatorem ipsum Assyriorum Holofernem circumvenit. Ut vidit, ut periit usque adeo', Cats J., *Sinne- en Minnebeelden* (Rotterdam: 1627) X.b.5.



Fig. 9. Caravaggio, *Salome*, ca. 1609, oil on canvas, 116 × 140 cm. Madrid, Palacio Real.



Fig. 10. Rubens, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, ca. 1617, oil on wood, 120 × 111 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum.



Fig. 11. Salomon de Braij, *Jael with Deborah and Barak*, 1630, oil on panel, 93 × 72 cm. Ponce, Museo de Arte.



Fig. 12. Johann Spilberg (the Younger), *Jael*, signed and dated 1644, oil on canvas, 72 × 68 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.

‘sirens’.⁹⁶ Michelangelo, allegedly, never married since he ‘loved art like a wife’.⁹⁷ The analogy between love of art and love for another person rests on the topical attribution of the invention of painting to a girl drawing her lover’s profile on a wall.⁹⁸ Thus the comparison between the ‘art of love’ and the visual arts returns in Michelangelo’s poetry as well as in Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*.⁹⁹ Rather more prosaic is Junius’s conclusion that pornography has contributed greatly to the development of naturalistic representation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ He mentions Euterpe’s ‘lokkende vermogen’, cf. ‘verleidster tot de kunst’, ‘vleyende Syreen’, Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 1; the formulation ‘Tooveressen’ is used by Oudaen in a laudatory poem; see also Sluijter E.J., *Seductress of Sight* 131–144.

⁹⁷ Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 349.

⁹⁸ Bie C. de, *Het gulden cabinet van de edel vry schilderconst* (Antwerpen: 1661) 23.

⁹⁹ For a seventeenth-century interpretation of Michelangelo’s poetry in this sense see Brune J. de, *Wetsteen* 280–283.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. the importance of ‘het graveersel van allerley gheyle onkuyscheyd verciert’, Junius F., *Schilder-konst* 104.

Painting and painter are equated to two 'lovers'; Cornelis de Bie admonishes the painter not to marry too early and stick to *Pictura* instead, a 'beloved with many lovers'.¹⁰¹ Spectators or amateurs are called 'lovers' as well – the common Dutch term is *liefhebbers*. This metaphor is partly inspired by the spiritual nature of sight described in Ripa's discussion of 'The Origin of Love'. Like the visual interaction between lovers, the confrontation with a successful artwork causes a two-way transfer of spirits. Castiglione is even more specific, stating that the movement of the gaze from the beholder to the object of his love, and vice versa, results in the creation of a mental image. He argues that the beloved's image, after its entrance through the eyes, is physically incorporated in the lover's body. Then a mixture of spirits from two directions takes place: 'Because the spirits meet in that sweet encounter, each takes on the other's qualities'.¹⁰² The act of loving is thus similar to the act of painting, when the artist creates a mental image that is partly inspired by his model and partly infused with his own spirit. Only when this image is fully internalised, it becomes a physical presence to be turned into a painting. Shakespeare describes the lover as a painter, who encapsulates the image of his beloved within the frame of his own body.¹⁰³

The constitution of the beloved's image, although inspired by seeing the other person, is ultimately an act perpetrated by the lover himself. In painting, analogously, the spectator's gaze emitting his or her heated spirits (first sparked by the painter's efforts in flesh colour) is indispensable to render the depicted humans their bodily 'heat' and 'blood'. Art theory from Alberti to Van Mander endorses an appeal to the beholder recommending including in paintings a figure who directly addresses the spectator.¹⁰⁴ These figures invite the spectator to

¹⁰¹ '[V]rijster met veel vrijers', Bie C. de, *Cabinet* 68ff., 207; cf. Sluijter, *Seductress of Sight* 131f.

¹⁰² '[I] spiriti s'incontrano: & in quel dolce intoppo l'un piglia la qualità dell'altro', Castiglione B., *Libro del cortegiano* III 180.

¹⁰³ 'Mine eye hath played the painter and hath stelled/Thy beauty's form in table of my heart,/My body is the frame wherein 'tis held', Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 24.

¹⁰⁴ '[A]lcuno, ilquale avisi gli spettatori [...] gli chiami a uedere [...] con volto crudele, & occhi bieci', Alberti L.B., *La pittura* II 30v; Mander K. van, "Den Grondt" IV, par. 38, f. 18r. On the related anecdote that effigies of divinities look at all spectators, see Shearman J., *Only connect* 159ff., referring to Pliny's description of a painting of Minerva 'spectantem spectans, quacumque aspiceretur', *Naturalis Historia* XXXV.120; for an example from Dutch art theory cf. 'het beeld dier Godin zodanig geschilderd

identify totally with them and become, in Van Hoogstraten's words, 'as another onlooker' to the depicted narrative.¹⁰⁵ Junius writes that art may involve the public in a virtual reality, just 'as if we were by at the doing of the things imagined'.¹⁰⁶ His treatise explains how the beholder's imagination is constitutive for the artistic moment. The public mentally recreates the reality that the painter originally envisioned: the spectators must 'accustome their mind to such a lively representation of what they see expressed in the picture, as if they saw the things themselves and not their resemblance only'.¹⁰⁷ Junius concludes that art lovers, because of the indispensability of their imagination, may be truly called artists.¹⁰⁸

'Each takes on each others qualities', writes Castiglione: while the beholder's senses are taken over by the painter's illusionistic skills, the art object itself changes too, from a lifeless material object into an animate reality. Thus Shakespeare's troubled heroine in *The Rape of Lucrece*, contemplating a wall painting of figures in mortal agony 'lends them words, and she their looks doth borrow': on the one hand Lucrece's imagination infuses the painting with life, on the other hand she is physically influenced by the depicted passions.¹⁰⁹ This reciprocal character is expressed more fully in the recommendation that painted figures should entice the beholder into starting a conversation, that is to say, taking part in an illusion in which the artwork disappears to make place for an alternative reality appealing to senses other than sight. De Piles writes: '*La véritable peinture doit appeler son spectateur par la force et la grande vérité de son imitation, et [...] le spectateur surpris doit aller à elle, comme pour entrer en conversation avec les figures qu'elle représente.*'¹¹⁰

This thinking in terms of 'taking over of qualities' is close to Agrippa's idea that all objects, by means of a spiritual transmission, infuse their

[...] dat haare oogen ieder aanschouwer scheenen aan en na te zien', De Lairese G., *Groot Schilderboek* (Haarlem: 1740, 1707–1) I 236.

¹⁰⁵ '[D]en toezinder, als een anderen omstander', Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 116.

¹⁰⁶ Junius F., *The Painting of the Ancients [...] according to the English Translation (1638)*, ed. Aldrich K. – Fehl P. – Fehl R. (Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford: 1991) 265.

¹⁰⁷ Junius F., *Painting of the Ancients* 303, *Schilder-konst* 335.

¹⁰⁸ Junius F., *Schilder-konst* 62f.

¹⁰⁹ *The Rape of Lucrece* I.1498.

¹¹⁰ De Piles R., *Cours de Peinture* 4.

surroundings with 'a like power'.¹¹¹ Donne stresses the reciprocal character of sight speaking about a 'negotiation' between the lover and the object of his gaze.¹¹² Art theory supposes a similar negotiation between painter and spectator: when the mixture of spirits from beholder and artwork takes place, the beholder effectively partakes in some of the painter's original qualities, those qualities that were expressed in his effort at persuasive representation of living figures. Thus, just by looking at art one may be transformed into a painter.¹¹³ Van Hoogstraten suggests that the beholders of a Venus, painted by Raphael, experience the same love that Raphael felt for his model, and he concludes: 'what seems to be impossible can be achieved by love, since the spirits (*geesten*) are most active when the senses are in love'.¹¹⁴

When painting is essentially a 'conversation', to use De Piles's term, or a reciprocal transfer of qualities, questions about the nature of creativity arise. If the ultimate responsibility for the artistic moment lies neither with the artist nor with the spectator, one should look elsewhere. Agrippa might hold the 'spirit of the world' responsible,¹¹⁵ whilst Castellini grants great power to love; from the context of art theory one would rather point at the Muses. These creative goddesses, who seduce painters and spectators alike to take part in an alternative reality, may thus be given ultimate credit for the artistic moment. Art theory designates the metaphysical dimension of this dialogical situation with another term from love lyric, the concept of 'grace'. As the finishing touch that 'cannot be taught by any rules' but constitutes 'the life and soule of Art', according to Junius, the pictorial quality of grace is bestowed upon the artist by the spectator.¹¹⁶ The artist's biographies by Arnold Houbraken are explicit about the 'given' character of grace. A

¹¹¹ See n. 10; cf. Ficino, *De amore* orat. 14, chap. 7, VIII: 'Quo pacto amator amato similis efficiatur'.

¹¹² Donne J., "The Extasy", *Love Poems* xxxv.

¹¹³ Polidoro was putatively 'door't zien schilderen in een Schilder verandert', Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 10.

¹¹⁴ In Palazzo Chigi 'wrocht Urbijn, toen hy verlief was; Venus deede hem Venus op het schoonst ten toon brengen [...] Het geen onmooglijk schijnt kan de liefde uitvoeren, want de geesten zijn wakkerst in verliefde zinnen', Hoogstraten S. van, *Inleyding* 291. Cf. De Heere on Van der Goes, cited in Mander K. van, "Leven der Nederlantsche..." f. 203v–204r.

¹¹⁵ See note 11.

¹¹⁶ Junius, *The Painting of the ancients* 283, 287. On the given character of grace cf. Spear R.E., *The 'Divine' Guido* (New Haven: 1997) 102–114.

portrait of the philosopher Anna Maria van Schuurman is accompanied by a disclaimer to the spectator: 'if [the image] may lack in art, it will be completed by your goodwill (*gratia* in Houbraken's Latin; *gunst* in Dutch)'.¹¹⁷ Apparently, the artistic moment is incomplete without any interplay between artwork and beholder.

We have situated the concept of *spiritus* in Vasari's description of Bronzino's *Pygmalion and Galatea* in a discourse where art is seen as the two-way transfer of spirits. On the one hand the artist's or art lover's heated spirit virtually changes a statue into a living being. On the other hand, the work of art may directly invite the beholder to take part of this alternative reality, as is exemplified in Galatea's look at the spectator. A poem by Marino, reflecting on Pygmalion's powers, describes the reciprocal nature of artistic experience: this experience causes an ultimate cross-over of qualities, when a beholder's admiration for a statue has rendered him immobile, while the statue has become a living being.¹¹⁸

Related notions about the power of vision are expressed in a work from the Northern tradition. Rembrandt's *Blinding of Samson* depicts the biblical story at its violent climax [Fig. 13]. In Ripa's entry on the ocular origin of love, quoted earlier, this subject is mentioned as an example of the dangers of sight: Samson's fall for Delilah's charms was apparently rightly punished when his eyes, which had betrayed him, were stabbed out.¹¹⁹ Rembrandt may have wished to connect the Biblical story to contemporary notions about the nature of sight: on the background, Delilah is shown staring knowingly at the beholder [Fig. 14].

Rembrandt's painting confronts the beholder with the power of vision over the mind. In this sense, his image implicitly warns against the seductive powers of painting that the preacher Camphuysen had called in a well-known equation, pointing out its dangers to the devout, a 'seductress of sight'.¹²⁰ When Camphuysen likewise speaks about

¹¹⁷ 'Si negat ars formam, gratia vestra dabit [...] Uw gunst voltoit het werk, indien'er kunst aan faalt', Houbraken A, *De Grote Schouwburg* I 314.

¹¹⁸ '[S]i di senso lo stupor mi priva,/ch'io son quasi la statua, ela par viva', Marino G., *La Galeria* I 293ff.

¹¹⁹ Ripa C., *Iconologia* 389.

¹²⁰ 'Verleyt-Ster van't gezicht', Camphuysen D.R., *Verscheyden theologische werken* (Amsterdam: 1638) 108; cf. Sluijter E.J., *Seductress of Sight* 12; on the *Samson* cf. Manuth V., "Die Augen des Sünders – Überlegungen zu Rembrandts 'Blendung Simsons' von 1636 in Frankfurt", *Artibus et historiae* 11 (1990), 169–198.



Fig. 13. Rembrandt, *The Blinding of Samson*, ca. 1636, 236 × 302 cm. Frankfurt am Main, Städelches Kunstinstitut.



Fig. 14. Detail of Fig. 13.

painting's 'enchanted poison', he apparently concurs that the charm as well as the danger of painting stem from its appeal to the frailest part of man, where spirits may leave and enter the body, which may eventually seal his mental and corporeal fate.¹²¹

¹²¹ '[T]overich vergif', Camphuysen D.R., *Theologische werken* 108.

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‘SINGE THE ENCHANTMENT FOR SLEEPE’:
MUSIC AND BEWITCHED SLEEP IN EARLY MODERN
ENGLISH DRAMA

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In 1594 Thomas Nashe published a pamphlet on dreaming titled *Terrors of the Night* in which he warned that the devil, being ‘most active at night, will one by one assaile [those] in their sleepe.’¹ Late Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights seized upon the idea of this vulnerable twilight in several dramatic works that appeared at the height of the witch craze in early modern England. Twentieth and twenty-first century literary scholars and historians have examined the role of magical practitioners on the English Renaissance stage from Shakespeare’s Prospero to Heywood and Brome’s raucous hags in *The Late Lancashire Witches*. However, scholars of musicology have only recently begun to imagine the powers of music combined with the magic of not only learned alchemists but also the dark arts of witches and enchantresses. Early modern English theologians, philosophers and composers have acknowledged the cosmic similitudes between music and magic, and judging from the number of plays featuring musical witches and sorceresses, London’s playwrights were well aware of these contemporary treatises. Though scholarship on sleep and dreams and the early modern imagination have come to the fore in recent years, serious musicological research into the relationship between witchcraft, music, and enchanted sleep as represented on the early modern English stage is noticeably absent. This study will examine three strikingly similar English plays, with Greco-Roman antecedents, written around the turn of the seventeenth century – Robert Greene’s *Alphonsus* and *Orlando Furioso*, and John Lyly’s *Endymion* – for the potent combination of music, magic, and bewitched sleep. Using a combination of song, sorcery, and erotic magic, the witch-sorceresses in these works charm the unsuspecting heroes to sleep with vocal and instrumental music.

¹ Nashe T., *The Terrors of the Night* (London: 1594) Biiij.

The Perils of Early Modern Sleep

Few full treatises on sleeping and dreams other than Thomas Nashe's pamphlet exist from the early modern era in England; however, Thomas Hill produced a learned treatise in 1568 called *The most pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* which draws on several classical sources including, most notably, the works of Averroes. Philip Goodwin's work *The Mystery of Dreams Historically Considered* (1658) is also a later example of an attempt at early modern dream interpretation.² Less notably, Thomas Elyot and Thomas Cogan wrote homeopathic manuals that include references to the weakness of sleep titled *The Haven of Health* (1541) and *The Castel of Helthe* (1636), respectively. Yet these and other literary sources consistently identify the state of sleep as a defenceless moment, one at which the mind is dulled and the risk of demonic invasion is heightened. In Philip Goodwin's treatise on dreams, he warns against these night visions as manifestations of man's sinful, carnal desires. He agrees with Nashe's claim that this drowsy state is fertile ground for the devil's manipulations: 'In the night-time, and in the midst of man's sleep may this sin arise and run out in his dreams [...]. Again, much of Satan, in his subtle designs, may hereby come to be discovered.'³ Beyond clinical works on sleep and dreaming, the late-seventeenth century poet Jonathan Swift shared this fear of help-less unconsciousness in his poem 'On Dreams' when he refers to the mind as 'unburden'd' when at sleep – supple, pliable and vulnerable to invasion.⁴ In a culture that respected the verity of demonic invasion and the efficacy of magic and witchcraft, these writers warn their readers as to the vulnerability of an unconscious state. Thomas Nashe's comments on our particular susceptibility to the devil at night, and thus when we sleep, again confirm this warning. He describes the 'quiet silence of the night' as the 'Divells Blacke booke, wherein he recordeth

² See Hill T., *The most pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (London: 1568); Goodwin P., *The mystery of dreames, historically discoursed* (London: 1658); Elyot T., *The Castel of Helthe* (London: 1541); Cogan T., *The Haven of Health* (London: 1636). See also Rivere, J., "'Visions of the Night': The Reform of Popular Dream Beliefs in Early Modern England", *Parergon* 20 (2003) 109–138; Lewin J., "'Your Actions Are My Dreams': Sleepy Minds in Shakespeare's Last Plays", *Shakespeare Studies* 31 (2003) 184–204; and Maus K., *Inwardness in Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: 1995).

³ Goodwin P., *The mystery of dreames* 154, 146–7.

⁴ Swift J., "On Dreams", in Roscoe T. (ed.), *The Works of Jonathan Swift*, vol. 1 (London: 1841) 626.

all our transgressions.' Like when afflicted with disease, sleep weakens us and we are more vulnerable to the snares of the devil, or as Nashe states: 'So the Divell when with any other sickness or maladie the faculties of our reason enfeebled and distempered, will be most busie to disturb us and torment us.'⁵ Our constitutions are weakened with sleep; our mental faculties are malleable, and we are vulnerable to the devil's 'torment' as Nashe says. The popularity of Nashe's writings at the turn of the seventeenth century – and the sustained interest in dream interpretation through the seventeenth century – would have reached the playwrights of London's theatres, and Nashe's inspired and somewhat inflammatory prose on, as he says, 'the terrors of the night' would have been inspiring to dramatists like Robert Greene and John Lyly. These popular playwrights portrayed practitioners of magic that used music and enchantments in concert to lull the unsuspecting heroes in the drama to an 'unburden'd' and sleepy state. Early modern audiences would have recognised the alluring powers of music as a powerful conduit for Renaissance magic – that is, both arts were based on the system of correspondences and early modern theories of spirits as the connective tissue between the seen and the unseen.

Music and Magic as 'Spirit'

The efficacious powers of music belonged to an invisible world of correspondences that informed modern knowledge about the occult and inexplicable. Early modern practitioners of magic relied on natural philosophy to decipher the occult world of correspondences, signs, and similitudes. The Renaissance idea of natural philosophy, which included the discipline of music, was regarded as the investigation of the seen and the unseen worlds, the hidden and the visible.⁶ Scientifically related to natural philosophy, natural magic was, in many ways, the means by which one could bridge the gap between and manipulate various

⁵ Nashe T., *Terrors of the Night* Biiij.

⁶ See Austern L.P., "Nature, Culture, Myth, and the Musician in Early Modern England", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51 (1998) 2f. and Couliano I., *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (Chicago: 1987) for excellent twentieth-century commentary on this phenomenon. See also, Bacon F., *Sylva Sylvarum: or a Naturall Historie* (London: 1627) for Bacon's experiments with nature, music, noise, and sound. See Gouk P., *Music, Science and Natural Magic in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: 1999) for commentary on Bacon and his philosophies.

effects in these two discrete worlds of symbiotic correspondence. Francis Bacon comments on occult practices as ‘the science which applies the knowledge of hidden forms to the production of wonderful operations; and by uniting (as they say) actives with passives, displays the wonderful works of nature.’⁷ The German occult philosopher Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, whose work was translated into English in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, asserts his view of natural magic and its relationship with the cosmos when he writes:

Natural Magicke then is that, whiche having intently behelde the forces of all natural thinges, and celestiall, and with curious search sought out their order, doth in such sorte pushing abroade the hidden and secret powers of nature: coupling the inferiour things with the qualities of the superiour as it were certaine enticements by a naturall joyning of them together; that therof oftentimes doe arise marvelous miracles: not so much by Arte as nature whereunto this Arte dothe proffer herselfe a servaunte, when shee worketh these things.⁸

As Agrippa explains, natural magic is the science by which the learned magus can manipulate celestial bodies to cause corporeal effect in the microcosmic world. The early modern magician’s art involved controlling hidden correspondences to bring about very real effects. Agrippa again explains the craft of the magician in his books on occult philosophy:

Magick is a faculty of wonderfull vertue, full of most high mysteries, containing the most profound Contemplation of most secret things, together with the nature, power, quality, substance, and vertues thereof, as also the knowledge of whole nature, and it doth instruct us concerning the differing, and agreement of things amongst themselves, whence it produceth its wonderfull effects, by uniting the vertues of things through the application of them one to the other, and to their inferior suitable subjects, joyning and knitting them together thoroughly by the powers, and vertues of the superior Bodies.⁹

Magic was an airy spirit capable of invading corporeal bodies and producing mysterious effects. Roger Bacon explains that spoken words

⁷ Bacon F., *On The Advancement of Learning* (London: 1605) 366–8.

⁸ Agrippa H.C., *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans. J. F[rench] (London: 1651) 54. Agrippa drew many of his ideas from Marsilio Ficino whose theories on occult philosophies and cosmic sympathies largely informed Neo-Platonic thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Ficino M., *Three Books on Life*, trans. C. Kaske – J. Clarke (Binghamton, NY: 1989).

⁹ Agrippa H.C., *Occult Philosophy* 2f.

are created 'by the thoughts of the Soule' and are released by 'open wayes, through which a great passage of Spirits, heate, evaporation, virtue [...] which may bee made by the Sole and heart.'¹⁰ The ability to control the heavens through natural magic was an awesome power reserved for the upper classes of learned society. It was a power that had to be used wisely by a magus for it could easily be manipulated for demonic effect. Or, as one modern scholar explains:

The words or letters, [...] having no one-to-one correspondence with a planet or planetary object, can only be effective through the medium of an intelligent being who understands their significance, namely a human being, a planetary angel or a deceiving demon.¹¹

Magical correspondences were vital for early modern men and women, because those who could harness celestial harmony to bring about genuine effects in the physical world were powerful indeed. The art of music was linked to the art of natural magic and was just as crucial to performing magical spells and *incantations* – literally meaning 'sounding music' – of enchanters and enchantresses.

The ways in which music – an airy spirit like magic – invaded the body and soul were well known to early modern men and women, and one could easily be elevated to divine heights through music or ensnared to the darkest depths.¹² The unknown author of *Praise of Musick* describes music's powerfully extreme properties:

For as the Platonicks and Pythagorians think al soules of men, are at the recordation of that celestial Musicke, whereof they were partakers in heaven, before they entred into their bodies so wonderfully delighted, that no man can be found so harde harted which is not exceedingly allured with the sweetnes thereof.¹³

¹⁰ Bacon R., *The Mirror of Alchimy* (London, 1597) 62.

¹¹ Lehrich C.I., *The Language of Demons and Angels: Cornelius Agrippa's Occult Philosophy* (Boston: 2003) 52.

¹² See Finney G., *Musical Backgrounds for English Literature: 1580–1650* (New Brunswick, NJ: 1962) 47–49; Sydenham H., "The Wel-Tuned Cymball", in *Sermons upon Solemne occasions* (London: 1637) 22f.; Raleigh W., *A Treatise of the Soule in Works* (Oxford: 1829) ii; Donne J., "To the Countesse of Bedford. Honour is so sublime", in Grierson H.J.C. (ed.), *Donne's Poetical Works I* (London: 1953) 219; Goodman G., *The Fall of Man* (London: 1616) 4; Glanvill J., *Some Philosophical Considerations touching the Being of Witches and Witchcraft* (London: 1667) 15.

¹³ *Praise of Musick* (London: 1586) 40. John Case had long been considered the author of this treatise; however this fact has been disputed since the 1980s. See Binns J.W., *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England* (Leeds, UK: 1990) 370, 436–443.

Composed of air itself, music invades the ear like higher medical spirits and can affect the listener in either positive or negative ways. Music was not only an airy vapour like the spirit, but it was *moving* air and was therefore likened to the physicality of the body itself.¹⁴ Agrippa produces perhaps the most concise explanation of music's relationship to and power over the corporeal spirits:

Sound is a breath, voice is a sound and animate breath; Speech is a breath pronounced with sound, and a voice signifying something; the spirit of which proceedeth out of the mouth with sound and voice; Chaludius saith that a voice is sent forth out of the inward cavity of the breast and heart, by the assistance of the spirit.¹⁵

In his treatise on natural philosophy, Francis Bacon also prioritises the aural over the visual or tactile when he explains that 'the *Sense of Hearing* striketh the *Spirits* more immediately than the other Senses: and more incorporeally than *Smelling*: for the *Sight*, *Taste*, and *Feeling*, have their Organs, not of so present and immediate Access to the Spirites, as the hearing hath.'¹⁶ Music could literally invade the ear and stir the senses more powerfully than any other art. As musicologist Linda Austern explains: 'Music derived still further power from its warm, airy physical nature, for it was most often perceived to be a living spiritual substance not unlike the souls of men or the intermediary spirits that relayed corporeal perception to those souls.'¹⁷ The efficacy of natural magic could undoubtedly be heightened when paired with the alluring harmonies of music. Henry Reynolds makes this emphatic connection between natural magic and music in his treatise on poetics, *Mythomystes*: 'There is nothing of greater efficacy then the hymnes of *Orpheus* in naturall Magick, if the fitting musick, intention of the minde, and other circumstances which are knowne to the wise, bee considered and applied.'¹⁸ In his instructional tome, Charles Butler reminds his readers of the power of music to produce effects upon whose ears it falls: 'Musick is the Art of modulating Notes in the voice or instrument.

¹⁴ See Ficino M., *Three Books on Life* II.8–21; Walker D.P., *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: 1958) 5–11; and Tomlinson G., *Music in Renaissance Magic* (Chicago: 1993) 101–144, especially 110f.

¹⁵ Agrippa H.C., *Occult Philosophy* 257f.

¹⁶ Bacon R., *Sylva Sylvarum* 38.

¹⁷ Austern L.P., "Art to Enchant": Musical Magic and its Practitioners in English Renaissance Drama", *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 115 (1990) 203.

¹⁸ Reynolds H., *Mythomystes*, in Springarn J.E. (ed.), *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: 1908) 166.

The which, having great power over the affections of the minde, by its various Moodes produceth in the hearers of various effects.'¹⁹ Indeed Francis Bacon echoes these sentiments when he directly likens music to magic because of its ability to bring about involuntary effects. He classifies music as a 'voluptuary art' because it brings about changes to the mind and the passions: music 'relate[s] to sight and hearing [...] for as these two senses are the purest and most chaste; the sciences which belong to them are the most learned, both being waited upon by the mathematics.'²⁰ Music could heighten magic's effects because melody and harmony, being 'voluptuary' arts, had direct access to the corporeal spirits. Imbued with these magical and efficacious properties, properly and carefully constructed music could cure melancholic or choleric temperaments, replicate cosmic harmonies on earth, or ease one's mind into a soothing state.²¹ It necessarily follows that music structured around incorrect compositional practices and derived from demonic, as opposed to angelic, inspiration could affect the spirits in a detrimental manner. The reasons for early modern beliefs in the effects of incantation and magic lay in their very definitions of music and affective spirits. Even the particular timbre of a human voice was a strong communicator of 'extra-musical' ideas. The mythic siren is an excellent example of the power of words mingled with song to produce magical effects. These 'bewitching' women were dangerous songstresses that were 'now taken for enticing pleasures [...] and their musick for that eloquence which perswades to destruction.'²² Their beautiful voices and alluring appearances would charm men to their deaths. Richard Burton, in his

¹⁹ Butler C., *The Principles of Musick, in Singing and Setting* (London: 1636) 1.

²⁰ Bacon R., *Advancement of Learning* 32.

²¹ For more information on music, medicine, and the humours, see for example, Byrd W., *Psalmes, Sonnets, and Songes* (London: 1588) epistle to the reader; Gouk P., "Music, Melancholy, and Medical Spirits in Early modern Thought", in Horden P. (ed.), *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy since Antiquity* (Aldershot: 2000) 173–194 and "Sister Disciplines?: Music and Medicine in Historical Perspective", in Gouk P. (ed.), *Music Healing in Cultural Contexts* (Aldershot: 2000); Austern L.P., "Musical treatments for lovesickness: The early modern heritage", in Horden P. (ed.), *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy since Antiquity* (Aldershot: 2000) 213–245 and "'The conceit of the minde': Music, medicine and mental process in early modern England", *Irish Musical Studies* 4 (1996) 133–151.

²² Sandys G., *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished, mythologiz'd, and represented in figures. An essay to the translation of Virgil's Æneis* (Oxford [and London]: 1632) 195. See also Austern L.P., "'Singe Againe Syren': The female musician and sexual enchantment in Elizabethan life and literature", *Renaissance Quarterly* 42 (1989) 434f.; Dunn L.C., "Ophelia's Songs in Hamlet: Music, madness, and the feminine", in Dunn L. – Jones N. (eds.), *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (New York: 1994) 50–64; McFeely

important work *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, categorically states that ‘a sweet voyce and musick are powerfull enticers’ and that music is ‘so powerful a thing, that it ravisheth the soul.’²³ The human voice, accompanied by words and song, was a powerful force. In the wrong hands however – *i.e.*, sirens or sorceresses – it could have ill effect.

Early modern men and women believed that one was at particular risk for these demonic interventions or magical manipulation when hovering between waking consciousness and sleep – a critical weakness as sleep removed one from the realities of the visible world and represented, as Jennifer Lewin has stated, ‘the vulnerable lure of oblivion.’²⁴ Mental faculties are dulled, the imagination is compromised and their own thoughts become the fodder for magical practitioners’ schemes. Musicological scholars such as Linda Austern and Gary Tomlinson have examined the bridges between the magical arts and the efficacy of music; however none have connected these ideas with the vulnerability of the sleeping mind. Both ‘airy spirits,’ music and magic can invade one’s soul through the ear. Indeed the effects of magic – learned, medicinal, folkloric, or demonic – are heightened when paired with music. Music was akin to magic in its inherent relationship to the cosmos and mathematical proportions. Music, like magic, was an airy spirit capable of producing corporeal effects through occult operations, or as William Ingpen succinctly explains in *The Secrets of Numbers*: ‘Sound is a spirit.’²⁵

Vulnerable Sleep and Musical Magicians on the English Stage

Three plays premiered in public and private theatres at the turn of the seventeenth century in London call for peculiarly similar scenes, depicting evil sorceresses who cast musical sleep charms on the unsuspecting heroes of the drama. John Lyly’s *Endymion* (1591) and Robert Greene’s *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1599) and *Orlando Furioso* (1594) were produced within an eight-year period and cast singing, witch-like sorcer-

J.C., “The signifying serpent: Seduction by cultural stereotype in seventeenth-century England”, Austern L.P. (ed.), *Music, Sensation, and Sensuality* (London: 2002) 299–319.

²³ Burton R., *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London: 1652) 111, 297.

²⁴ Lewin J., “‘Your actions are my dreams’: Sleepy Minds in Shakespeare’s Last Plays”, *Shakespeare Studies* 30 (2003) 190.

²⁵ Ingpen W., *The Secrets of Numbers According to Theologicall, Arithmetically, Geometricall and Harmonicall Computation* (London: 1624) 95.

esses who charm the 'unburden'd' minds of these sleepy Greco-Roman characters.²⁶ Each play also draws on classical sources and characters for its inspiration. John Lyly's work for the famous boy choristers, the Children of Paul's, was premiered in the choir school's private theatre for more elite audiences in late sixteenth century England. In Lyly's drama, Dipsas, listed in the *dramatis personae* as 'aged enchantress' and her assistant Bagoa charm the young Endymion into a Rapunzel-like sleep with music and magical herbs. Dipsas herself describes the limits of her powers:

Fair lady, you may imagine that these hoary hairs are not void of experience, nor the great name that goeth of my cunning to be without cause. I can darken the sun by my skill and remove the moon out of her course; I can restore youth to the aged and make hills without bottoms. There is nothing that I cannot do but that only which you would have me do, and therein I differ from the gods, that I am not able to rule hearts; for, were it in my power to place affection by appointment, I would make such evil appetites, such inordinate lusts, such cursed desires, as all the world should be filled both with superstitious hearts and extreme love [...]. This I can: breed slackness in love, though never root it out.²⁷

Dipsas and Bagoa work their magic on Endymion, luring him into a sleep that will last till his beard has grown white and his beautiful youth has faded. While Endymion lies on the cusp of consciousness, Dipsas instructs Bagoa to 'fan with this hemlock over his face, and sing the enchantment for sleep, whilst I go in and finish those ceremonies that are required in our art.'²⁸ These witches, and indeed their early modern audiences, understand that a sleep charm, paired with an alluring feminine voice and potent herbs, is a powerful transmitter of musical magic, especially in the hero's drowsy, weakened state.

Though the music of Bagoa's song is not extant, Lyly's *Endymion* was performed by the Children of Paul's and fortunately, some of the music by the famous troupe chorister and composer Thomas Ravenscroft (1590–1635) survives. There is another magical sleep scene in *Endymion* (IV.iii.33–45) – that is, the mythical fairies 'pinching song'

²⁶ Lyly J., *Endymion* (Manchester: 1996); Greene R., *The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus King of Arragon*, in Churton Collins J., (ed.), *The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene* (Oxford: 1905). The classical antecedent for Dipsas can be found in Book One, Elegie 8 of the early modern English translation of Ovid's *Amores*, translated by C. Marlowe (London: 1603).

²⁷ Lyly J., *Endymion* I.iv, 20ff.

²⁸ Ibid. II.ii, 35.

used to charm Coristes to sleep. They sing: 'Pinch him, pinch him, black and blue,/Saucy mortals must not view/What the Queen of Stars is doing,/Nor pry into our fairy wooing.' The 'Fayries Daunce' from Ravenscroft's *A Briebe Discourse* (1614), using the same lyrics printed in the play, contains an uncomplicated madrigalian setting of similar verses printed in the dramatic text and is written for four voices that fit comfortably in soprano and alto range – matching that of the boy choristers in the company. Most of the music attributed to Ravenscroft for Paul's was probably produced around the turn of the seventeenth century when he was actually a part of the chorus, aligning *Endymion* with his early tenure with the company. Ravenscroft's music itself in this extant example is not necessarily sinister or 'demonic' in its actual composition – that is, there are no jarring discords or dissonant harmonies of which to speak. However audiences would have recognised the popular trope of 'fairy pinching' – including its magical connotations and associations with sleep – which was fashionable in dramatic works and drollery during the Elizabethan period.²⁹ One of the more famous examples is of course the pinching song from Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* wherein the folkloric creatures circle around Falstaff and sing their pinching song with the lyrics: 'Pinch him, fairies, mutually;/Pinch him for his villainy./Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,/Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.'³⁰ Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* borrows directly from the fairies' pinching song in *Endymion* when, in Act II, Dromio describes the 'fairy land' and the punishments that might befall them there at the hands of these mischievous creatures who might 'suck [their] breath, and pinch [them] black and blue.'³¹ Available to the more literate members of English society, collections of humorous songs and poems such as *Windsor Drollery* and *Westminster Drollery* contained lyrics for fairy dance tunes, echoing this connection between sleep, magic and music. Written toward the end of the seventeenth century, *Windsor Drollery* proves the Elizabethan fashion for fairies and pinching songs continued with an entry about these folkloric creatures describing their nocturnal activities: 'Then if the House be foul,/With platter, dish, or bowl,/Upstairs we nimbly creep,/And find

²⁹ See Latham M.W., *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Shakespeare and the Fairies of Folklore* (New York: 1972) 121, 239.

³⁰ Shakespeare W., *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Cambridge: 1997) V.v, 91–4.

³¹ Shakespeare W., *The Comedy of Errors* (Cambridge: 2004) II.ii, 195.

the Sluts a sleep,/Then we pinch their arms and thighs.³² It seems fairies use the cover of night and the quiet vulnerability of sleep to enact their magic, and as characters with folkloric antecedents, it is common their magic is aided by music and dancing. Endymion is first lulled to sleep by Bagoa's herbs and lullaby, her spell made complete by the green magic of the singing and dancing fairies.

Robert Greene draws on more classical inspiration in two plays with classical antecedents, *Alphonsus* and *Orlando Furioso*. In *Alphonsus*, the aging enchantress Medea and her entourage charm the unsuspecting Amurack to sleep with the aid of 'sweet' music. The unsuspecting hero asks: 'What heavenly Musicke soundeth in my eare? Peace, Amurack, and hearken to the same.' The stage direction for music follows: '*Sound musicke, hearken Amurack, and fall a sleepe. [then Medea enters]*'.³³ Medea, a Greco-Roman character usually cast as an incredibly powerful and merciless sorceress, is scathingly identified as a 'wretched witch' by the very spirit she brings to life in order to complete her charm on Amurack. This spirit, Calchas, appears in a 'white surplice and a cardinal's mitre' hurling insults at the powerful sorceress, calling her magic 'cursed charms' and complaining about this rude awakening. This moniker – 'wretched witch' in particular – lowers her to a more folkloric level, likening her to a domestic witch character that would have been more familiar to the public playgoing audiences at the Rose where Greene's work was first performed by the Queen's Men. Featuring a familiar in the form of a Catholic clergyman would have been ironic political comedy to audiences in light of the rampant anti-Catholic public sentiment and satirical literature produced during Elizabeth I's reign. Regardless of this scathing costume indication, Greene portrays Medea's magical powers combined with alluring and 'sweet' music as spirits capable of invading Amurack's mind and charming him to sleep in an attempt to direct the course of his fate.

Greene's earlier play *Orlando Furioso* follows suit with the magical practitioner Melissa labelled in the *dramatis personae* as an 'enchantress,' though she is immediately identified – like Medea, and Dipsas – as 'some old witch' by one of the male characters upon her first entrance

³² *Windsor Drollery* (London: 1672) F-F2r.

³³ Greene R., *Alphonsus* II.ii, 848ff.

on stage.³⁴ In Act IV, Melissa arrives with a glass of wine and offers it to Orlando in a gesture of celebration after he learns the Trojans have fled. After he graciously accepts the potion, she charms him into a tortured sleep wrought with visions:

(*Hee drinkes, and she charmes him with her wand, and lies downe to sleepe.*)
Orlando: What here! The paltrie bottle that Darius quaft?
Else would I set my mouth to Tygres streames,
And drinke up ouerflowing Euphrates.
My eyes are heauey and I needs must sleep.³⁵

At this point Melissa conjures Satyrs and music, and recites a Latin charm to accompany this magical display. This mystical Latinate spell conjures spirits of the forests and calls up dark forces for the witch's aid. However, the popular audiences that attended Greene's play, also premiered at the Rose, would have perhaps recognised her speech as suspicious creeds associated with learned authority, mysterious *pater nosters* and Catholic heresy. But it is a garbled creed, a pastiche of impressive Latin phrases that are generally unrecognisable as proper constructions. Melissa joins a long line of theatrical witches, enchantresses, cunning women and fortune-tellers who use and misuse the sounds and speech of the learned to establish false authority.³⁶ She combines an alchemical reaction (the wine potion for sleep), a magical charm, and music to lure Orlando into a tortured state of prophetic visions. Recent scholars have made attempts to locate the music used for this curious and efficacious scene. Diana Poulton, best known for her work cataloguing the lute music of John Dowland, has suggested the music for this scene was probably an ayre by the famous Elizabethan lutenist titled 'Orlando Sleepeth.'³⁷ [Fig. 1]. Pieces with similar titles appear in several later manuscripts with names such as 'Orlando furiosoe,' 'Orlando,' 'Orlandus Furiosus,' or 'Orlando-Chanson Englesae.' This

³⁴ Greene R., *Orlando Furioso* (London: 1909) IV.ii, 1128. Greene's drama was inspired, no doubt, by John Harrington's c. 1590 English translation of Ariosto's poem (1532) of the same name.

³⁵ Ibid. IV.ii, 1142.

³⁶ One of the more famous examples of Latin used as false learned authority appears in Thomas Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* when the "wise woman" pretends to read from Latin texts by Ptolemy and Erra Pater. See Heywood T., *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, (ed.) A. Verity (New York: 1874) 263–8.

³⁷ I am grateful to Ian Harwood, President of The Lute Society and fellow participant in the Folger Institute's Faculty Weekend Seminar 'Harmony's Entrancing Power' in September 2005, for helping me make this connection.



Fig. 1. John Dowland, “Orlando Sleepeth”, manuscript dated before 1626, transcribed by the author. Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.2.11 (B) fol. 55v.

earlier piece was probably by Dowland and most likely used in Greene’s drama – the certainty of which can partially be based on corroboration from playwright John Webster.³⁸ In *The Devil’s Law Case* (1623), Webster connects the madness and delusions of the sleeping Orlando to this piece again when he gives the following direction:

I have an humour now to goe to Sea
 Against the Pyrats; and my onely ambition,
 Is to haue my Ship furnish with a rare consort
 Of Musicke; and when I am pleased to be mad,
 They shall play me *Orlando*.³⁹

The quiet strains that open Dowland’s ‘Orlando Sleepeth’ seem well suited to accompany a scene of bewitched slumber. Orlando’s sleepy submission to Melissa’s spell is captured in this four-part lute piece in

³⁸ Poulton D., *John Dowland* (Berkeley: 1982) 164f. still doubts whether this piece can absolutely be attributed to Dowland. The Dowland manuscript, containing the initials J.D., is located at Cambridge University Library (MS Dd.2.11 (B), fol. 55v. The sources in which the various other anonymous Orlando pieces appear are, William Ballet’s Lute Book (Trinity College, Dublin, D.I.21, p. 111); the Mynshall Lute Book, c. 1597–99, fol. 5v (collection of Robert Spencer, Essex); Fuhrmann G.L., *Testudo Gallo-Germanica*, by E.M.A. [Elias Mertel?] (Nürnberg: 1615) 47; Leiden (Bibliotheca Thysiana, Thysius Lute MS, f. 399); Kassel (Landesbibliothek, 4 Mus. 108. I, Victor Montbuisson’s Lute Book, 1611); Hove J. van den, *Florida* (Ultrajecti, 1601, fol. 106); Prague University Library, Mikulas Smal’s Lute Book, 1608–1615 (MS XXIII F 174, fol. 22v); Cambridge Consort Books (Dd. 14. 24. Cittern, fol. 16v). Interestingly, a broadside to the tune “Orlandos musique” appears in *Shirburn Ballads* No. LVIII.

³⁹ Webster J., *The Devil’s Law Case* (London: 1623) sig. L4. Also Poulton D., *John Dowland* 165.

which the first two parts are in a simple duple meter while the contrasting third and fourth sections shift to a dance-like triple meter – perhaps to signify the moment in the drama when the satyrs enter with their music and dance. After an initial statement of the duple meter tune, the restatement of the same tune in the proceeding section drops a whole step in pitch, mimicking perhaps the effect of Melissa’s spell, musically portraying Orlando’s sleepy mind drifting off into slumber. The melodic and harmonic descent by a whole step was quite irregular in terms of compositional practice at this time. Coupled with the abrupt shift in rhythm, this moment would have been a jarring acoustic experience for early modern audiences, but quite a vivid musical portrayal of this sleep charm at work. Dowland’s lute piece is not the only source that features this dramatic downward transposition, mimicking the onset of sleep. The music transcribed in the Shirburn collection of broadsides which appears after the ballad ‘My dear, adieu! my sweet love, farewell’ is titled ‘Orlandoe’s musique’ and is attributed, perhaps erroneously, to the English composer Orlando Gibbons.⁴⁰ [Fig. 2]. However, the tune is nearly identical to Dowland’s piece ‘Orlando Sleepeth’ and contains the same structural details – one slower, duple meter section followed by a more lively, triple meter dance section. Similarly, this curious downward transposition by a whole step in Dowland’s piece is also present in the Shirburn tune. These two sources seem to agree on the use of this unusual transposition, perhaps indicating this compositional technique as an acoustic signifier of sleep. It is quite exciting to imagine that this particular musical gesture – the exact transposition of a musical phrase repeated and lowered a whole tone – could have been synonymous with the specific extramusical idea for early modern English audiences, that of a sleepy, vulnerable mind.

The portrayal of magical music was certainly nothing new for London’s playhouses. The early modern English belief system was a mixture of erudition and superstition – one muddled with the confusion and persecution brought on by religious transition and the remnants of pagan traditions. Lest we forget this was also the time when philosophers, composers, and scientists were concerned with sympathies and antipathies, and revivals of classical thought at texts. The practitioners of magic – fairies, enchantresses, sorceresses – featured in these late Elizabethan dramatic works are indebted to pastoral and Greco-Roman

⁴⁰ *The Shirburn Ballads 1585–1616* (Oxford: 1907) 236.



Fig. 2. “Orlandoe’s musique”, ca. 1594, transcribed by the author from music contained in *The Shirburn Ballads 1585–1616* (Oxford: 1907) 236.

antecedents, though each character, even the fairies, is at some point in the drama directly addressed, as ‘witch’ or ‘hag’. Due to the overwhelming fascination amongst Londoners with contemporary witch accusations, trials, and executions, playwrights undoubtedly catered to this obsession by producing dozens of plays mentioning or featuring witch characters around the turn of the century. Dipsas, Bagoa, Medea, and Melissa are certainly a higher breed of witch than Shakespeare’s feral, weird sisters or the bumbling hags in Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch*; however, passing references to them as more inert and domestic versions of a powerful magician firmly root these characters in the milieu of a witch-crazed early modern London. Clearly these playwrights were also aware of the increased interest in and scholarship on dream interpretation that developed during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Those who pondered the meaning of

night visions philosophised on not only the mental mechanisms that enabled dream production, but also the demonic manipulation of the spirit when the rational mind was at rest. Drawing inspiration from the early modern philosophy that, according to Ingpen, 'sound is a spirit', these Elizabethan dramatists heightened the effects of their sorceresses' sympathetic magic with the enticing strains of music. By combining affective music and occult manipulations, these magical women could induce and manipulate defenceless slumbers, preying on the vulnerability of men's weakened minds.

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BILDER DES UNSICHTBAREN: ROBERT FLUDDS KONZEPTION DES WELTGEISTES

Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann

Schöpfungstheologie als Grundlage von Fludds Metaphysik- und Physikkonzept

Fludds Enzyklopädiekonzept, wie es sich in *Utriusque Cosmi historia* präsentiert, ist wesentlich vom patristischen Konzept der *Physica Mosaica* bestimmt.¹ Der englische Theosoph fasst in dieser theologisch-philosophischen Theorie die ganze komplexe Vielfalt zusammen, mit der diese Lehre im Laufe der Jahrhunderte angereichert worden ist. Sein Erkenntnisinteresse geht dahin, die Geheimnisse der Schöpfung zu entdecken. Sein Ziel ist die Erkenntnis des Schöpfungsprozesses, den er als unabgeschlossen und unabgeschlossen, als erste und ursprüngliche und fortwährende Offenbarung Gottes sieht. Deren Interpretation durch die jüdisch-christliche Offenbarung ist für ihn verbindlich. Es geht ihm um den Nachweis, dass sich Gott in seiner Schöpfung geheimnisvoll zeigt und dass alle Wissenschaften von der Natur daran arbeiten, diese Geheimnisse zu entschlüsseln.

Geheimnisse müssen sich, damit sie erkannt werden, offenbaren. Deshalb ist der Prozess der Selbstoffenbarung der Schöpfung das Grundmuster von Fludds Enzyklopädie. Theologisch ist das Modell seines Denkens durch die Lehre von den himmlischen Hierarchien des (Pseudo)-Dionysius Areopagita geprägt, und er übernimmt die theologische Philosophie des Areopagiten in der Fassung, die Nikolaus von Kues für die Frühe Neuzeit formuliert hat:² Die Idee eines von Gott unmittelbar dem menschlichen Geist mitgeteilten theosophischen Wissens, die theologisch-trinitarische Bedeutung der Zahl und die

¹ Fludd hat selbst ein Werk mit diesem Titel verfasst, das nach seinem Tode 1638 in Gouda erschien und seine Ideen zur biblisch begründeten Physik und Medizin zusammenfasste: *Philosophia Moysaica. In qua Sapientia & scientia creationis & creaturarum Sacra verèque Christiana [...] ad amussim & enucleatè explicatur* (Gouda, Petrus Rammazenus: 1638). Eine englische Übersetzung erschien in London 1659.

² Meier-Oeser S., *Die Präsenz des Vergessenen. Zur Rezeption der Philosophie des Nicolaus Cusanus vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Münster: 1989).

Leitvorstellung einer himmlischen, kosmischen und irdischen Hierarchie sind für sein Denken bestimmend.

Die Grundargumentation seiner Naturphilosophie ist logos-theologisch. Das bedeutet: Die Schöpfung ist durch das Wort bestimmt. Hinter dieser Theorie steht die spätantike, von Philo von Alexandrien konzipierte Idee, dass die Schöpfung durch den göttlichen Logos vorbedacht und dann gemäß diesem „logischen“ Plan verwirklicht worden ist. Der Schöpfungsprozess wird so interpretiert, dass Gott zunächst sein Werk planend konzipiert – das ist die Schöpfung, die noch im Status des Gedankens Gottes, eben im Logos, ist – und sie dann, in einem logisch zweiten Schritt, verwirklicht, das heißt äußerlich und material real werden lässt. Neutestamentlich ist diese Theologie eine Exegese des Johannes-Prologs. Dieses Konzept der Schöpfungstheologie, das platonische und jüdisch-theologische Gedanken miteinander verband, war seit Philo von Alexandrien mit zwei zentralen Ideen und Bildern ausgedrückt: 1. mit dem Begriff der Sophia, 2. mit dem Konzept der *lingua adamica*. Die Sophia, die göttliche Weisheit, wurde als der Plan der Schöpfung begriffen, die *lingua adamica* stellte man sich als die Partizipation an der göttlichen Weisheit vor, durch die der paradiesische Mensch im Gnadenstand am göttlichen Weltenplan teilhatte.

Das Bild der Sophia, das die Deutung der Schöpfungstheologie seit der Patristik prägte, stammt in den Hauptzügen aus der Septuaginta, dort handelt es sich um die Weisheit Salomonis. Sie ist (Weisheit 7,26) beschrieben als der *unbefleckte Spiegel Gottes*, der den Plan der Schöpfung enthält – in dieser Beziehung ist die Sophia identisch mit dem göttlichen Logos. Sie wird zugleich beschrieben als das, was Gott (alleinig und erstmalig) als etwas lieben konnte, was er nicht selbst ist, was also den Charakter einer außergöttlichen Hypostase hat. Insofern ist die Sophia, wie das Buch der Weisheit schreibt, die Geliebte und Braut Gottes. Sie war deshalb als Jungfrau, als Geliebte des Hohenliedes, als primordialer Logos, als Glanz und Aura Gottes, als kosmische Madonna, als Makrokosmos und als Allegorie des Logos zugleich erklärbar. Fludd verbindet sie mit dem in der jüdisch-talmudischen Tradition überlieferten Engel *Metatron*, der Himmel und Erde miteinander verbindet.

Was teilte diese Sophia mit? Sie war die Außenseite Gottes, das, was Gott von sich der Welt, die er schaffen würde, mitteilen wollte. Als Logos war die Sophia sprachlicher Natur: Wenn Gott zunächst das Wort konzipierte und danach durch das Wort die Welt schuf, dann war die Sophia, sofern sie sprachlich war, das Medium, durch das die Welt

geschaffen wurde. Die Sprache, die Gott durch die Sophia sprach, war das wirkende Wort, durch das die Dinge aus einer primordialen, gedanklichen Existenz, wie sie die Sophia als Hypostase der Gedanken Gottes von der Welt darstellte, in eine extramental reale, die wirkliche Welt, entlassen wurden. Gottes Sprache schuf die Welt aus dem Nichts.

Die Frage danach, wie der Mensch an dieser göttlichen Weisheit teilhaben könne, wie er von dem Plan der Welt wissen und das ursprüngliche Wesen der Dinge erfassen könne, hat Philo von Alexandrien in einer Allegorese von Genesis 2,20 gefasst: Er hat die Namen, die Adam den Tieren gab – *und wie er sie nannte, so sollten sie heißen* – als Partizipation des noch nicht in die Sünde gefallenen Adam am wirkenden göttlichen Schöpfungswort interpretiert: Das war das Konzept der *lingua adamica*. Adam kannte vor seinem Sündenfall das Wesen der Dinge, denn das göttliche Schöpfungswort bestimmte die Dinge, ehe sie waren, in ihrem Wesen und rief sie dann mit der Kraft des *Fiat* in die Existenz.

Wer die Kenntnis der göttlichen Weisheit – der Sophia – besaß, konnte sie nur in der *lingua adamica* besitzen – und ihr Inhalt wäre die vollständige Weltkenntnis gewesen, wie sie vor dem Sündenfall vorhanden und wie sie mit dem Sündenfall verdunkelt worden war. Die wahre Enzyklopädie war also die Kenntnis der göttlichen Sophia, die das eigentliche Geheimnis der Natur ausmachte. Genau das ist der Horizont, in dem Fludd seine Enzyklopädie begriff. Die Allegorie des Titeltupfers *Integrae Naturae speculum Artisque imago* ist deshalb nicht allein eine Illustration der göttlichen Weisheit, sondern zugleich eine Inszenierung, wie das Göttliche in seiner Spiegelung nach außen zur Erscheinung kommt.

*Sophia-Metatron: Das emblematische Titeltupfer als Allegorie
der Wissenschaften*

Die Bildlichkeit ist eine Besonderheit der Wissenschaften in der Frühen Neuzeit. Sie basiert auf folgenden Grunderwägungen: Die Welt ist aus dem Logos geschaffen. Der Logos ist selbst als göttliches Wort bestimmt, zunächst als Selbstverständigung Gottes in der Trinität, dann aber auch entscheidend als Schöpfungswort: *Sprach, und es ward*. Diesen Prozess stellt man sich in zwei Schritten vor: Zunächst – „sprach“ – bestimmte Gott die Welt, wie sie sein soll. Danach, in einem zweiten Schritt – „ward“ – wurde aus dem Gedanken Gottes die extramentale Realität. In diesem

Sinne ist der Logos zunächst die geistige, ideale Konzeption der Welt; in diesem Stadium kommt es als allein konzipiertes geistiges Wesen noch nicht zur Erscheinung, sondern nur zum Gedanken, zum Logos. Der Gedanke fasst, d. h. definiert die Welt in ihren Strukturen, Gattungen und Arten, ehe die Welt als eigenständige, von Gott getrennte Welt räumlich und zeitlich real wird. In diesem Sinn handelt es sich um eine Phänomenologie, um ein Zur-Erscheinung-Kommen. Der Sprung von der gedanklichen Existenz der Welt zu ihrer Ausdehnung in Raum und Zeit vollzieht sich, indem das göttliche „Fiat“ ausgesprochen wird. In diesem Augenblick wird die Welt zur äußerlich erscheinenden Wirklichkeit. Aber diese Erscheinung ist zweideutig: Einmal ist sie wirklich, aber zum anderen ist sie nur das Bild des Unsichtbaren, das Bild der göttlichen Weltkonzeption, das durch die göttliche Kraft in die extramentale raum-zeitliche Realität gerufen wurde. In diesem Sinne ist die Welt, wie sie erschienen ist, nur Zeichen des Unsichtbaren, nur Symbol, das auf sein transzendentes Pendant verweist. Dieser Sachverhalt kann nur durch eine Symbolik der Bilder selbst sichtbar gemacht werden.

Die Bilder der frühneuzeitlichen Enzyklopädien sind deshalb nie nur die Darstellung eines materiellen und externen Sachverhaltes, sondern immer auch der Verweis auf die Tatsache, dass es sich um göttliche Schöpfungen aus einem geistigen Prinzip und dessen primordialen Konzepten, den *rationes seminales* des göttlichen Worts, handelt. Die Illustrationen sind in diesem Sinne konstitutiv für die Universalwissenschaften der Frühen Neuzeit: Es werden einerseits die Dinge in ihrem Verweischarakter aufs Geistige dargestellt, und es wird damit andererseits die Tatsache sichtbar gemacht, dass das Geistige zur Erscheinung kommt.

Das emblematische Titelpuffer von Fludds *Utriusque Cosmi historia* ist selbst Ausdruck eines enzyklopädischen Habitus, der sich ähnlich etwa in den Titelbildern bei Gregor Reisch (*Margarita Philosophica*), bei Khunrath (*Amphitheatrum Sapientiae aeternae*), bei Athanasius Kircher (*Ars magna sciendi*) oder noch im Titelpuffer von Diderot/D'Alemberts *Encyclopédie* zeigt. Es bringt sich die Weisheit zur Erscheinung. Allemal handelt es sich um die Figur der göttliche Sophia, der Weisheit, die als geistiges Prinzip und als erste, hypostatische Entäußerung Gottes die Welt als präkonzipiertes Ganzes und damit die Fülle des Wissbaren symbolisiert.

Bei dem vorliegenden Titelblatt handelt es sich, denke ich, um das schönste und eindrucksvollste der Weisheits-Titelblätter. Das Bild ist

von Matthaeus Merian gestochen³ und, ausweislich der langen Erläuterung, von Robert Fludd entworfen: Die Sophia ist die Hypostase des Universalwissens. Eine Interpretation des Titelpupfers hilft deshalb, einen Zugang zur spekulativen Enzyklopädie der Frühen Neuzeit zu bekommen.

Das Titelpupfer des ersten Bandes von Fludds *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* stellt die Sophia in ihrem Verhältnis zur Kosmologie und zur Kunst dar [Abb. 1]. Sie verbindet Himmel und Erde. Der Kosmos erscheint in drei Sphären, die ihrerseits wieder in Sphären und Segmente gegliedert sind: Der Engelshimmel, der Sternenhimmel, die Sphäre der vier Elemente. Ein vierter Bereich stellt die Künste dar, die den Kosmos nachahmen.

Die erste Sphäre, der äußere Himmel, ist das Empyraeum. Fludd hat ihn in drei Engelssphären aufgeteilt. Er beschreibt diesen Himmel als die erste Schöpfung von Cherubim, Seraphim, Erzengel und dem Rest der Engel.⁴ Der Fixsternhimmel, die 8. Sphäre des Sternenkosmos, bildet die Grenze zwischen der ersten und der zweiten Sphäre. Die Planetenbahnen sind in ihrer Ordnung ptolemäisch und unspezifisch-konventionell: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sonne, Venus, Merkur und Mond. Unterhalb der Mondsphäre, im sublunaren Bereich, beginnt der elementare Kosmos, die dritte Sphäre, zunächst mit den Bereichen von Feuer und Luft. Sie sind in dieser Sphäre kosmologisch oberhalb der *animalia* angesiedelt. Die Lebewesen, von denen stillschweigend vorausgesetzt ist, dass sie aus Wasser und Erde zusammengesetzt sind,⁵ haben in sich selbst wieder eine Ordnung. Mann und Frau stehen am höchsten; unterhalb des Mannes befindet sich der Löwe, dem entspricht der Adler in der ontologischen Dignität unterhalb der Frau. Es folgen paarweise Schlange und Schnecke, Delphine und Fische. Auch innerhalb der Pflanzen gibt es eine Hierarchie: Wein und Weizen haben die

³ Wüthrich L.H., *Das druckgraphische Werk von Matthaeus Merian d. Ae.*, Bd. 2: *Die weniger bekannten Bücher und Buchillustrationen* (Basel: 1972) 81: *Integrae naturae speculum*. Zu den anderen Illustrationen von *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* heißt es Seite 81: „Die eingestreuten Radierungen stammen alle von M. Merian und wurden in Oppenheim unter J.Th. de Brys Leitung ausgeführt.“

⁴ *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* I, 7. Diese Aufteilung ist nicht sehr ausführlich; vor allem im kabbalistischen Teil *De theosophico, cabalistico et physiologico utriusque mundi discursu* hat er über diese Sphären ausführlicher gehandelt.

⁵ Es ist auch möglich, dass sie aus Sal, Sulphur und Mercurius – also als paracelsistisch – komponiert vorgestellt werden.

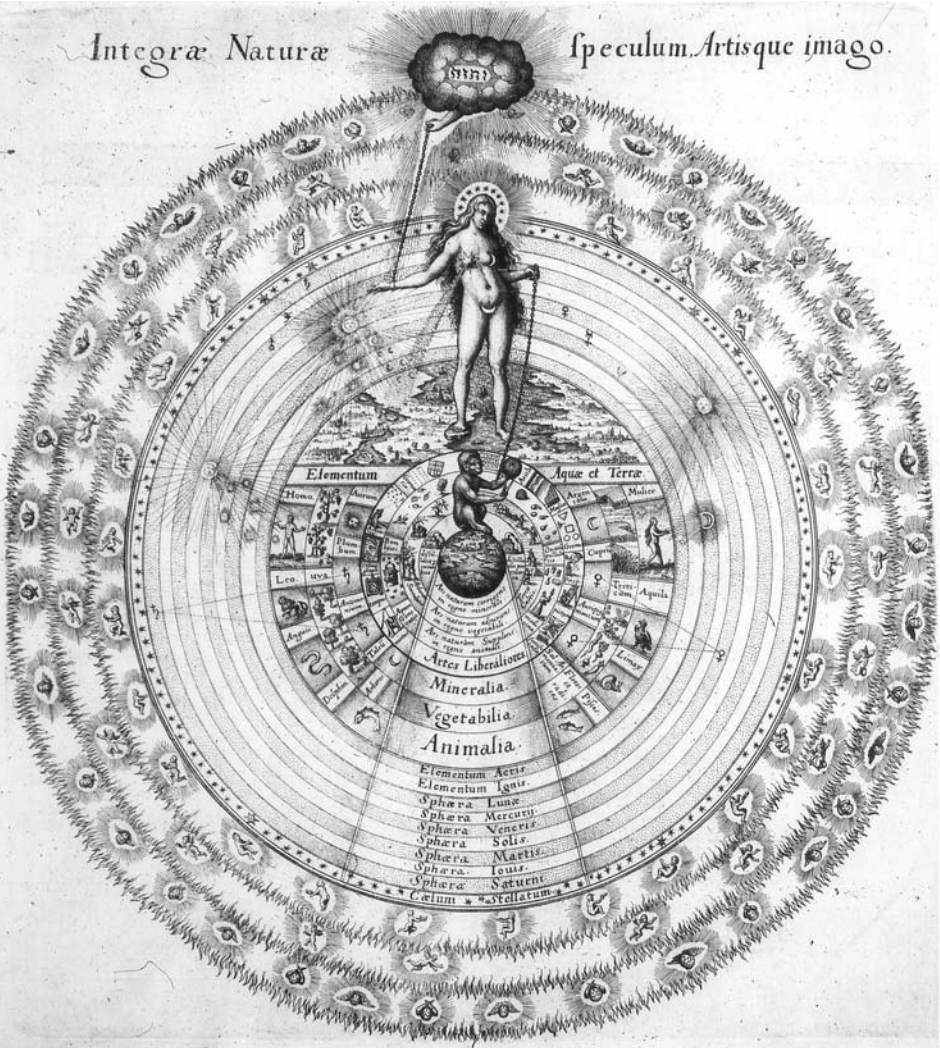


Fig. 1. Matthäus Merian, *Sophia Metatron*, Titelkupfer, in Robert Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* (Oppenheim: 1617).

höchste Stellung – vor allem wegen ihrer heiligen Bedeutung bei der christlichen Eucharistie.⁶ Für den Rest der Pflanzen stehen Bäume und Gemüse. Auch die Mineralia, die unterste Ordnung der irdischen Welt, haben eine Rangordnung; sie sind zugleich den Planeten zugeordnet, von denen vorausgesetzt wird, sie seien Symbole der Metalle. Gold und Sonne sind beide dem Mann zugewandt; die Frau dagegen ist von Silber und Mond affiziert. Die Mineralien sind auf besondere Weise mit den Planeten verbunden: Talcum gehört zum Mond, Antimon und Blei zum Saturn, Gold zur Sonne, Silber zum Mond; zur Venus gehören Kupfer und Auripigmentum.⁷ Auch Talcum⁸ ist dem Mond zugeordnet; für Sal Armoniacum, wohl Amoniaksalz, fehlt die Planetenzuordnung. Getrennt von der Natur, die innersten Sphären konstituierend, sind die menschlichen Künste situiert. Sie stehen nicht mehr unmittelbar unter der Ägide der Sophia, sondern unter der des Affen, der die Sophia nachahmt und nachäfft. Die Künste sind wiederum in vier Bereiche geteilt: die erste umfasst die freien Künste. Das Titelkupfer zählt diejenigen Künste auf, die Fludd im 2. Teil des ersten Bandes von *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* behandelt: Arithmetik, Geometrie, Perspektivik (= Optik), Malerei, Festungsbau, Bewegungslehre, Zeitmessung, Cosmographie (= Geodäsie), Astrologie⁹ und Geomantie. Die drei folgenden Bereiche sind die Künste, mit denen der Mensch die gefallene Natur verbessert, und zwar im Bereich der *animalia*, dem der *vegetabilia* und dem der Mineralien. Im Bezug auf das Tierreich illustriert das Titelkupfer die Seidenraupenzucht, die Bienen und Rinderzucht, die Medizin und die Kunst, Eier auszubrüten. Das Pflanzenreich wird durch Ackerbau und die Kunst, mittels Pfropfen Bäume zu veredeln (Surculatio), verbessert; das Mineralreich wird alchemisch veredelt: durch Destillatio in der Retorte oder in Cucurbita (Schröpfköpfen).

Die vier großen Sphären sind symbolisch verbunden. Aus einer Wolke mit der Aufschrift *JHWH* kommt ein Arm, der eine Kette hält: die *catena aurea Homeri*.¹⁰ Die Kette ist mit dem rechten Arm einer nackten Jungfrau verbunden, die vom Sternenhimmel bis zu den Elementen

⁶ Im *Anatomiae Amphitheatrum* (Oppenheim 1623 = *Utriusque Cosmi Historia*, Bd. IV, 7–42) hat Fludd eine ausführliche geistliche Allegorese des Weizens vorgestellt.

⁷ Hochgiftiges Schwefelarsen, das zum Malen verwendet wurde.

⁸ Schneiderkreide, Magnesiumsilikat.

⁹ Dass hier nur Astrologie vorkommt und keine Astronomie, ist nicht untypisch. Fludd ist Experte in Astrologie, aber astronomisch weitgehend uninteressiert.

¹⁰ Vgl. *Ilias* Θ 19ff.: *σειρήν χρυσεῖν ἐξ οὐρανὸν κρεμάσαντες κτλ.*; vgl. Platon, *Theaitetos* 153c.

reicht. Sie ist mit 10 Sternen gekrönt und hat langes blondes Haar. Aus der Sonne auf der linken Brust strömt himmlische Milch, die rechte Brust ist mit einem Mond gekennzeichnet, der Schoß mit einer Mondsichel. Der rechte Fuß steht auf einer Erdscholle, der linke Fuß reicht ins Meer. Vom linken Arm der Jungfrau geht die goldene Kette bis zum inneren Bereich der Künste, die durch den Affen symbolisiert sind. Mit einem Zirkel oder Proportionen-Winkel misst der Affe einen kleinen Globus, den er in der Hand hält. Die Ikonographie der weiblichen Figur hat Fludd so gerechtfertigt:

Wir haben sie etwa in der Weise abgebildet wie einige der neueren Philosophen, und zwar aus dem Grunde, damit ihre Kraft vom Geist des Beobachters besser erfasst werden kann. Wir haben uns also eine löbliche nackte Jungfrau in zartem und blühendem Alter vorgestellt, die einen Kranz von goldenen Sternen im Haar trägt, deren Augen hell strahlen, deren Wangen rot und lieblich sind. Es ist eine Jungfrau von solcher Schönheit und Anmut, vom Schöpfer mit allen Gaben aufs Herrlichste versehen, dass ihr weder Pallas, noch Venus, noch Juno, noch sonst eine von den Poeten besungene antike Göttin an Schönheit vorgezogen werden könnte.¹¹

Die Ikonologie und die Symbolik, die sich in Matthaeus Merians Stich zeigt, ist weniger pagan antik als vielmehr marianisch und apokalyptisch. Die Sophia gleicht der apokalyptischen Madonna mit dem Sternenkranz, aber hier sind es nicht sieben Sterne, wie in der Apokalypse, sondern zehn. Diese Anzahl wird nicht erläutert, aber es kann sich sowohl um die zehn Sephiroth als auch um die pythagoräische Zehn handeln – die Kompositusymbolik macht beides zusammen möglich. Zugleich entspricht die Figur dem Engel aus Apok. 10, der *den rechten Fuß aufs Meer und den linken auf die Erde setzte*. Dass die Jungfrau wie der apokalyptische Engel mit einem Bein im Wasser und mit dem anderen auf der Erdscholle steht, soll nach Fludd signalisieren, dass alle elementaren Dinge sich aus Sulphur (das ist die Erde) und Mercurius (das ist Wasser) zusammensetzen – Fludd vertritt eine Art eingeschränkten Paracelsismus. Wenn man die Symbolik weiter fasst, kann man auch die jüdische Symbolik hinzuziehen: Das jüdische Pendant zur kosmischen Madonna ist die Schechina,¹² die Anwesenheit Gottes auf der

¹¹ *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* I, 7f.

¹² Scholem G., „Schechina; das passiv-weibliche Moment in der Gottheit“ in: ders., *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit* (Zürich: 1962) 135–193; Schäfer P., *Mirror of His Beauty* (Princeton: 2002).

Erde; und noch die unterste der Sphira der 10 Sephiroth der Kabbala, Malchut, ist interpretiert als Engel *Metatron*, als der Riese, der vom Himmel bis zur Erde reicht und beide verbindet.¹³ Diese kabbalistische Interpretation macht deshalb Sinn, weil Fludd die Quellen der christlichen Kabbala kannte, sie im kabbalistischen Teil seiner Enzyklopädie, *De Theosophico, cabbalistico et physiologico utriusque cosmi discursus*¹⁴ benutzte und weil die Figur des Weltenengels bei Marsilio Ficino und vor allem in der großen Kabbala-Abhandlung von Paulus Riccio ausführlich behandelt worden war.¹⁵ Der kosmische Mensch, Makrokosmos, Engel und Jungfrau zugleich, war mithin eine Schlüsselfigur frühneuzeitlicher Spiritualität.

Die schriftliche Anleitung Fludds ins Bild setzend,¹⁶ hat Matthaeus Merian eine Kompositfigur aus der gängigen spirituellen kosmischen Ikonographie geschaffen, die den Makrokosmos, den kosmischen Menschen, die Jungfrau Sophia, die göttliche Weisheit aus der biblischen *Sapientia Salomonis*, die Weltseele als *intellectus agens*, die apokalyptische Madonna und den kabbalistischen Engel Metatron miteinander verbindet. Die Weltseele, Maria und die primordiale Weisheit gehören nach der patristischen und scholastischen Mariologie¹⁷ zusammen. Fludd beschreibt die Funktion der kosmischen Jungfrau vor allem im Bezug auf seine astrologischen Interessen: „Ihre einmalige Klugheit beherrscht das *primum mobile*“, den unbewegten Beweger des Kosmos, den sich Fludd als neunte Welt-Sphäre vorstellt.

Mit ihrer Hand bewegt sie die achte (Fixstern)-Sphäre, die mit Sternen geschmückt ist; und die Einflüsse dieser Sphäre auf das Werden der elementaren Dinge werden auf ihren Fingerzeig täglich erzeugt und disponiert. Die Planetenkörper dienen der Natur als Werkzeuge ihres

¹³ Fludd hat die Interpretation der Weltseele in der *Physica Mosaica* (1638, engl. 1659) 151, selbst vorgeschlagen. Die Weltseele entspricht „the Cabalists' great Angel, whom they call Mitatron: which by interpretation is, Donum Dei, the gift of God, which, as they say, is the catholick intellectual agent, from which all peculiar forms descend.“ Vgl. auch Davidson G., *A Dictionary of Angels, Including Fallen Angels* (New York: 1967) V: „In Talmud and Targum, Metatron is the link between the human and divine.“

¹⁴ Frankfurt 1621.

¹⁵ Ausführlich zum Zusammenhang: Schmidt-Biggemann W., *Philosophia perennis. Historische Umriss abendländischer Spiritualität in Antike, Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1998) besonders 259–286 (Kosmos Anthropos).

¹⁶ Es ist nicht klar, ob Fludd selbst eine Skizze für das Titelblatt mitgeliefert hat; jedenfalls bedient Merian Fludds Beschreibung: *Emblematis in huius tomi primordio luculentissima explicatio*.

¹⁷ Schipflinger T., *Sophia-Maria. Eine ganzheitliche Vision der Schöpfung* (München-Zürich: 1988).

Wirkens, sie sind gleichsam Hämmerchen, durch die die Metalle in den Bergwerken der Erde geschaffen werden. Die Gegend des Herzens und der Brust dieser Jungfrau ist der wahre Sitz und die Matrix der himmlischen Sonne; und ihr Bauch ist mit dem Mondkörper erfüllt. Aus ihren Brüsten strömt die ursprüngliche Wärme und Feuchtigkeit [– sie sind durch Sonne und Mond symbolisiert –] für alle elementaren [aus Erde/Sulphur und Wasser/Mercurius zusammengetzten] Geschöpfe, die sie ständig ernährt und stillt. Durch den goldenen Glanz ihres Herzens [– schreibt Fludd vor, Merian scheint das optisch nicht umgesetzt zu haben –] werden die Fixsterne und die Planeten erleuchtet und sozusagen zu Seelen, Lebewesen und Schönheiten gewandelt. Ihre Einflüsse wirken durch den Spiritus Mercurialis (den die Philosophen Geist des Mondes nennen) unmerklich auf die Matrix [d. h. die Ur-Materie der Elemente] und werden von oben nach unten weitergegeben, bis sie zum Zentrum [d. h. der Erde] gelangen. Ihre Wirkungen sind bei den verschiedenen Generationen nach Ort und Species deutlich verschieden.¹⁸

Die Sophia, die Fludd sich vorstellt und die Matthaeus Merian ins Bild setzt, ist deshalb nicht allein die Fülle primordialen Wissens und deshalb Allegorie des göttlichen Schöpfungsplans, sondern zugleich Weltseele, die das geistige Leben der oberen Sphären durch stellare Kräfte auf die elementare Welt vermittelt. In diesem Sinne offenbart die Welt die göttliche Weisheit; und die Schlüsselwissenschaft dieser Offenbarung ist die Astrologie. Fludd hat deshalb in seiner Enzyklopädie der Astrologie eine besonders gründliche und ausführliche Behandlung angedeihen lassen.¹⁹

Der Affe unter den Füßen der Jungfrau kann die Herrlichkeiten der göttlichen Sophia nur nachahmen. Dieses Tier namens „Kunst“ ist aus dem menschlichen Ingenium geboren, damit es aus der sorgfältigen Beobachtung seiner Herrin viele Geheimnisse, Schönheiten und Merkwürdigkeiten lernt und für die Bildung des Menschen nützt. Es hat keine eigene Dignität, sondern ist in seinem Wissen und Handeln völlig abhängig von der Sophia. In dieser Abhängigkeit kann das äffische Ingenium auch die Natur unterstützen. Natürlich ist der Affe eine polemische Figur: Er symbolisiert drastisch, dass Nachahmung des Göttlichen eben nur unverständiges Nachäffen ist; trotz aller geheimen Künste bleibt der Einblick in die innersten Wesenstrukturen Gott vorbehalten. Im Verhältnis zum Göttlichen bleibt das Menschenwissen äffisch. Das gilt umso mehr, je stärker menschliches Wissen autark und

¹⁸ *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* I (= UCH 1) 8.

¹⁹ Tomus I., Tractatus secundus, pars X (= UCH 2) 560–714.

unabhängig von der Offenbarung zu sein vorgibt. Deshalb ist auch der Affe noch an der *aurea catena* angekettet. Er sitzt auf der Erdkugel, dem Mittelpunkt des Kosmos und hält einen Zirkel in der rechten Hand, mit dem er einen künstlichen Globus ausmisst, den er in der linken hält. Dieser Globus ist mit Breiten- und Längengraden versehen, ein Zeichen für die menschliche (und eitle) Rechenkunst. Gleichwohl entspricht die Größe des Affen, der die vier Sphären der Wissenschaft ausfüllt, der Ausdehnung der Sophia – der Affe ist deshalb für die Wissenschaft, was die Sophia für den Kosmos ist. Aber es zeigt sich, dass die Maßstäbe, die er an die Wissenschaft heranträgt, die seines eigenen eitlen berechneten Weltbildes sind, das mit dem göttlich gestalteten Kosmos nur die Kugelform gemeinsam hat. Dass dieser äffische Globus exakt die Sphäre der freien Künste ausfüllt, demonstriert, dass gerade diese freien Künste am anfälligsten für die Hybris einer sich autonom dünkenden Wissenschaft sind.

Die Künste, die der Affe als Abbild der Sophia betreibt, teilen sich denn auch in zwei Bereiche: die freien und die angewandten Künste. Die freien Künste sind für den Menschen die gefährlichsten; nur wenn sie in der rechten Frömmigkeit ausgeübt werden, erlauben sie tiefste Einsicht in die göttliche Ordnung. Fehlt dem Wissen die Frömmigkeit, ist es anmaßend und verderblich. Arithmetik, Musik, Geometrie, Perspektivik [Optik], Malerei und Fortifikation, Mechanik [*motus*], Zeitmessung [*tempus*], Kosmographie, Astrologie, Geomantie sind in diesem Sinne frei, dass sie zum Heil oder Unheil gereichen können.

Die angewandten Wissenschaften sind auf die dreifache Ordnung der Natur bezogen: *animalia*, *vegetativa*, *mineralia*. Hier gilt es, dass die Kunst der Natur dabei helfen kann, zu ihrer eigentlichen Bestimmung zu kommen. Die praktische Wissenschaft wirkt daran mit, die Folgen des Sündenfalls auch in der Natur mit göttlicher Hilfe zu überwinden. *Ars naturam supplens in regno animali*. Diese Aufgabe wird illustriert durch die Sparten: Bienenzucht, Seidenraupenzucht (*Bombyces*), Brützkunst für Eier, Medizin für die belebten Körper, gleichviel ob Mensch oder Tier.²⁰ *Ars naturam adjuvans in regno vegetabili*: Hier geht es um Landwirtschaft: Fludd/Merians Beispiele sind das Pfropfen (*arborum surculatio*) und der Ackerbau (*terrae cultivatio*). Schließlich ist die Alchemie für das

²⁰ In seinem *Anatomaie amphitheatrum* (Frankfurt: 1623), dem letzten Teil von *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* (= UCH 4), und in der *Medicina Catholica* (Gouda: 1638) hat Fludd ausführlich die kosmischen Dimensionen der menschlichen Krankheiten behandelt.

Mineralreich zuständig: *Ars naturam corrigens in regno minerali*. Merian stellt zwei Sorten Destillation dar – per curcubita (wohl die gedrehten Röhren, die zur Branntweinproduktion benutzt wurden) und durch die Retorte, d. i. den Destillierkolben.

Das Verhältnis von Wissenschaft und Naturoffenbarung ist damit deutlich: Die freien Wissenschaften sind die gefährlichsten und zugleich die, die der göttlichen Ordnung am nächsten kommen. Sie beziehen sich auf die Harmonie der Welt im Ganzen und zeigen die geistigen Geheimnisse auf, die hinter der Natur liegen und nur durch sie sichtbar werden. Die praktischen Künste hingegen bleiben im Sinnlichen – aber sie helfen dabei, die Welt so zu vervollkommen, dass am Ende wahr wird, was der Apostel Paulus für die vollkommene, kommende Welt vorausgesagt hat und was das Ziel aller praktischen Wissenschaft der frühen Neuzeit ist, die sich in theologischem Rahmen sieht, dass nämlich *Deus sit omnia in omnibus*.

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SYMPATHY IN EDEN.
ON *PARADISE WITH THE FALL OF MAN*
BY RUBENS AND BRUEGHEL*

Paul J. Smith

'By Occult Sympathy of Nature'

In *Les mots et les choses* (1966),¹ Michel Foucault describes how, in the vision of the Renaissance, the things of the world are related to each other by the principle of *similitude*, which is active in four forms: *convenientia*, *aemulatio*, analogy and sympathy. *Convenientia* is similitude based on proximity; *aemulatio* is based upon reflexion; analogy is similitude of relationships.² The last one, sympathy, is the most important of the four because of its omnipresence:

Elle est principe de mobilité: elle attire les lourds vers la lourdeur du sol, et les légers vers l'éther sans poids; elle pousse les racines vers l'eau, et elle fait virer avec la courbe du soleil la grande fleur jaune du tournesol.³

The assimilating effect of sympathy ('elle a le dangereux pouvoir d'*assimiler*, de rendre les choses identiques les unes aux autres, de les mêler, de les faire disparaître en leur individualité')⁴ is compensated by its 'figure jumelle', antipathy:

Celle-ci maintient les choses en leur isolement et empêche l'assimilation: elle enferme chaque espèce dans sa différence obstinée et sa propension à persévérer en ce qu'elle est.⁵

The notions of sympathy and antipathy described by Foucault are recurrent *topoi* in the natural histories of the Renaissance. In his vast *Historia animalium* (1551–1587), Conrad Gesner devotes a whole section (D) to

* I thank Peter Mason (Rome) for having corrected my English.

¹ Foucault M., *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: 1966).

² Thus implying at least three objects: $A \leftrightarrow B$ and $B \leftrightarrow C$, but mostly four objects: $A \leftrightarrow B$ and $C \leftrightarrow D$.

³ Foucault M., *Les mots et les choses* 38.

⁴ Foucault M., *Les mots et les choses* 39.

⁵ Foucault M., *Les mots et les choses* 39.

the sympathy and antipathy of most of the animals he discusses, and another great zoologist, Ulisse Aldrovandi, also pays much attention to this aspect, for instance in his *Ornithologiae, hoc est de avibus historiae libri XII* (1599–1603).

In his *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (1555), the French ornithologist Pierre Belon enumerates some examples from the world of birds, and underlines the hidden and inexplicable character of the phenomenon:

[...] pourquoy c'est que le petit Roytelet est ennemy de la Cheueche, & de l'Aigle, & que le Lorient, & Charadrios guerissent la iaunisse de ceux qui en sont malades, pour les auoir regardez? Ne pourquoy les Char-donnerets sont ennemis des Alouettes? Et l'Epeiche de Pics verds? La Tourtelle mene guerre avec le Lorient, le Lorient avec le Iay.⁶

He is forced to conclude that the only explanation of the phenomenon lies in Nature's pleasure:

Si donc nous mettons en auant leur guerre, leur paix, leurs haines, concorde, assemblees, & discorde, & qu'on en cherche la raison, autre chose n'en sçaura lon dire, sinon que tel a esté le plaisir de nature, qui est ourage caché en elle.

Or, as François Rabelais has it, 'by occult sympathy of Nature', 'par occulte sympathie de Nature'.⁷

There is even a whole treatise on zoological motifs in architectural columns based on the principle of antipathy between animals. The aim of this book, written by the French architect Joseph Boillot,⁸ is to furnish a series of pictorial examples (with commentary) of animals that are worth featuring on a column because they are strong enough to support a building. In order to force the animals to assume their task of 'portefaix', they are combined with one or more of their contraries:

[...] a fin de donner quelque apparence qui ayt faict dresser ces animaux pour les assuiettir d'estre portefaix contre leur mouuement & assiette

⁶ Belon du Mans P., *L'Histoire de la nature des oyseaux. Fac-similé de l'édition de 1555* (ed. P. Glardon) (Geneva: 1997) 11.

⁷ Rabelais F., *Œuvres complètes* (ed. M. Huchon) (Paris [Bibl. de la Pléiade]: 1994) 694. Sympathy and antipathy play an important role in Rabelais' books.

⁸ I quote from Boillot J., *Nouveaux pourtraitz et figures de termes pour user en l'architecture. Langres 1592* (ed. P. Choné – G. Viard) (Paris: 1995) (no pagination). The full title is: *Nouveaux pourtraitz et figures de termes [= columns] pour user en l'architecture: composez & enrichiz de diversité d'Animaulx, representez au vray, selon l'Antipathie & contrariété naturelle de chacun d'iceulx* (1592).

naturelle, ie les ay accompagné de quelque contraire, soit aultre animal ou plante, qui leurs estant ennemy ou contendant par quelque dispathie naturelle & inconnue, leur faict tenir ceste contenance dressee, qui est comme vne disposition que les appreste a tenir bon & resister a ce que leur est contraire.

This results in weird and dramatic artistic visions, strange but attested in contemporary zoology: an elephant assaulted by both a dragon and a mouse [Fig. 1]; a powerful unicorn attacked by a lion; or a bear threatened by a human skeleton.

That the notions of sympathy and antipathy are indeed *lieux communs* in Renaissance thinking is clear from Erasmus's colloquy *Amicitia* (1531), which is entirely devoted to this subject. The two characters Ephorinus and John open this dialogue by stating both the commonness and the mysteriousness of the phenomenon, and then talk about the age-old enmity between serpent and man, dating from Eden:

Ephorinus. Often I fall to wondering what deity Nature consulted when she mingled certain mysterious sympathies and antipathies in everything under the sun – improbable ones by any known causes, except that apparently she enjoyed this spectacle, just as we find entertainment by setting cocks among quail.

John. I'm not yet clear about your meaning.

Ephor. Then if you want it put more plainly, I'll tell you. You know snakes are a species hostile to man.

John. I know that between them and us there is irreconcilable enmity – and will be as long as we remember that ill-omened apple.⁹

There follow endless lists of examples. More than a hundred animals are mentioned, and sometimes discussed. For instance, on antipathy Ephorinus dissects:

[...] to account for the hatred between swans and eagles, raven and oriole, crow and owl, eagle and wren is almost impossible, unless the eagle is envied because he's called king of birds. Why is the owl at odds with other, smaller birds, weasel with crow, dove with pyralis, ichneumon wasps with spiders, ducks with gulls, falcons with buzzard-hawk, jackals with lions? Why, moreover, do shrewmice dread a tree full of ants? Whence so irreconcilable a warfare between beetle and eagle, whose very natures provide the basis for a fable?¹⁰

⁹ Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, transl. C.R. Thompson (Chicago-London: 1965).

¹⁰ Erasmus, *The Colloquies* 523.



Fig. 1. Antipathy between elephant and dragon. In Joseph Boillot, *Nouveaux pourtraits et figures de termes pour user en l'architecture* (Langres: 1592), Bibliothèque municipale de Châlons-sur-Marne.

Of sympathy, he gives the following examples:

So too a certain mysterious bond of affection unites some animals in an extraordinary way, as peacocks and pigeons, doves and parrots, black-birds and thrushes, crows and herons (which help each other in turn against foxes) and falcon and kite against buzzard-hawk, their common enemy.¹¹

The colloquy ends with the subject announced by the title: friendship between humans. A man should 'associate with those to whom he is drawn by natural sympathy' (*Colloquies* 527).

The topical development of Erasmus's dialogue on natural sympathy and antipathy, from Man's Fall to individual friendship, furnishes the background and the scope of my subject: the principle of sympathy and antipathy in the *Paradise with the Fall of Man* (ca. 1617) by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, now in the Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis in The Hague [Figs. 2 and 3]. This painting recently received much attention in the context of the exhibition *Rubens and Brueghel: A Working Friendship*, held in 2006 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and at the Mauritshuis, The Hague.¹² Current scholarly attention is mainly focused on the collaboration between the two painters. Their joint production is situated in its historical, biographical and intellectual context,¹³ and analysed with the help of X-rays. It has proved possible to determine each painter's contribution to *Paradise with the Fall of Man*: it was Rubens who initiated the working process by painting the figures of Adam (modelled on the Belvedere Torso, drawn by Rubens during his stay in Rome), Eve, the Serpent, and the brown horse behind Adam [Fig. 2]; then the painting moved from Rubens's studio to Brueghel's workplace, where it was finished: Brueghel first added the larger animals, then filled the surrounding landscape with plants and smaller animals, mostly working from front to back. Brueghel succeeded marvellously in integrating his friend's contribution to the whole, for instance by making the cat's ear overlap Eve's ankle, and by adding a flying teal, visible through Eve's hair.

¹¹ Erasmus, *The Colloquies* 523.

¹² See the catalogue Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel. A working friendship* (Los Angeles-The Hague-Zwolle: 2006).

¹³ Honig E., "Paradise Regained. Rubens, Jan Brueghel, and the sociability of visual thought", in Jong J. de et al. (eds.) *Rubens and the Netherlands* (Zwolle: 2006) (= *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 2004, 55) 271–301.



Fig. 2. Detail of Fig. 3. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Paradise with the Fall of Man*, ca. 1617, oil on panel, 74 × 114 cm. The Hague, Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis.

Rubens's contribution has the consequence that, contrary to the relegation of the theme of Adam and Eve to the background in Brueghel's other paintings of the Fall,¹⁴ that theme is here foregrounded. This implies a kind of emulative cooperation. On the one hand, Brueghel is forced to compete with Rubens by deploying his excellence in his specialisation as an animal painter, and even to improve himself in this field. He does so by painting his animals in a natural attitude – more natural than in his previous paintings (for instance the two purple coots are more realistically rendered than in his preceding paintings) and by presenting *naturalia* in accordance with the latest zoological information (this is the case with the two birds of paradise, as we shall see). On the other hand, Rubens's foregrounding invites, or forces, him to give a more symbolic as well as a zoological significance to the animals – even if some of them are literal quotations from work by himself or others. Therefore, contrary to Brueghel's *The Creation with Adam* (1594) or *The Entry of the Animals in Noah's Ark* (1613), the subject is not a mere pretext to paint animals and plants for their sole beauty or their zoological or botanical curiosity, but also for their symbolism. Thus every animal, quoted or not, had to be rethought. Curiously, this double zoological and symbolic implication of the animals in the painting has only barely been touched upon in recent criticism.

My objective is therefore twofold. Firstly, I intend to consider the conventional symbolism of the animals represented. For this, the recent, very exhaustive *Lexikon der Tiersymbole* (2004) by Sigrid and Lothar Dittrich¹⁵ will be of great help. Secondly, I seek to develop the naturalist perspective whose importance has recently been shown by Arianne Faber Kolb for *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*¹⁶ by looking at the painting as 'a visual catalogue of animal and birds function[ing] as a type of microencyclopedia'.¹⁷ Looking at the place the animals occupy in the painting, their *dispositio*, as well as their interaction, i.e. their suggested *convenientia*, *aemulatio* and analogy, I will focus specifically on their sympathy and antipathy and their symbolic meanings. In this analysis, the texts of Erasmus, Belon, Gesner, Aldrovandi and Boillot

¹⁴ Especially his *Paradise with the Fall of Man* (1612), now in Rome, Doria Pamphilj Gallery.

¹⁵ Dittrich S. and L., *Lexikon der Tiersymbole. Tiere als Sinnbilder in der Malerei des 14.–17. Jahrhunderts* (Petersberg: 2004).

¹⁶ Kolb A.F., *Jan Brueghel the Elder. The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* (Los Angeles: 2005).

¹⁷ Kolb A.F., *Jan Brueghel* 27.

will form the points of reference (although I have no hard evidence that Rubens or Brueghel consulted them). Besides, references will be made to other pictorial representations of the Fall, before and after the painting by Rubens and Brueghel. As for the earlier ones, during their visit to Haarlem in 1613, the two friends probably saw two important paintings on the subject, both praised by Karel van Mander in his *Schilder-boek* (1604): one by Frans Pourbus (1566), the other by Cornelis van Haarlem (1592). And of course, Dürer's preoccupations with the theme of the Fall were in everyone's mind. Later representations will be occasionally referred to in so far as they inform us about thematic specificities of the subject.

*A Multitude of Diverse Animals*¹⁸

For the convenience of the reader, it is useful to begin with a survey of the animal species represented in the work. The following diagram and foldout [Fig. 3, page 220] is intended to help readers to find their way in the zoological diversity of the painting. All of the animals that I consider important for my argument have been identified and numbered (first Rubens's serpent [1] and horse [2], then Brueghel's animals, beginning with the ones arranged around Adam and Eve, and then passing from the foreground to the background of the painting, and from left to right).¹⁹ In the case of detached pairs (as in the case of the two birds of paradise, one sitting in the foreground, the other flying in the background), they are distinguished as a or b. I have not been able to identify some animals because they are simply too small or too remote. In the case of a parakeet (51), which also figures in the *Allegory of Air* (1621), the species depicted is probably an unknown, now extinct species of the mainly Asian genus *Psittacula* (which includes the well-known Ring-necked Parakeet [*Psittacula krameri*]).²⁰

¹⁸ The quotation comes from Houbraken ('een menigte van allerhande Dieren'). See note 61.

¹⁹ I thank Hein van Grouw (Naturalis, National Museum of Natural History, Leiden) for his help with the identification of some difficult species: glossy starling, snipe and hawfinch.

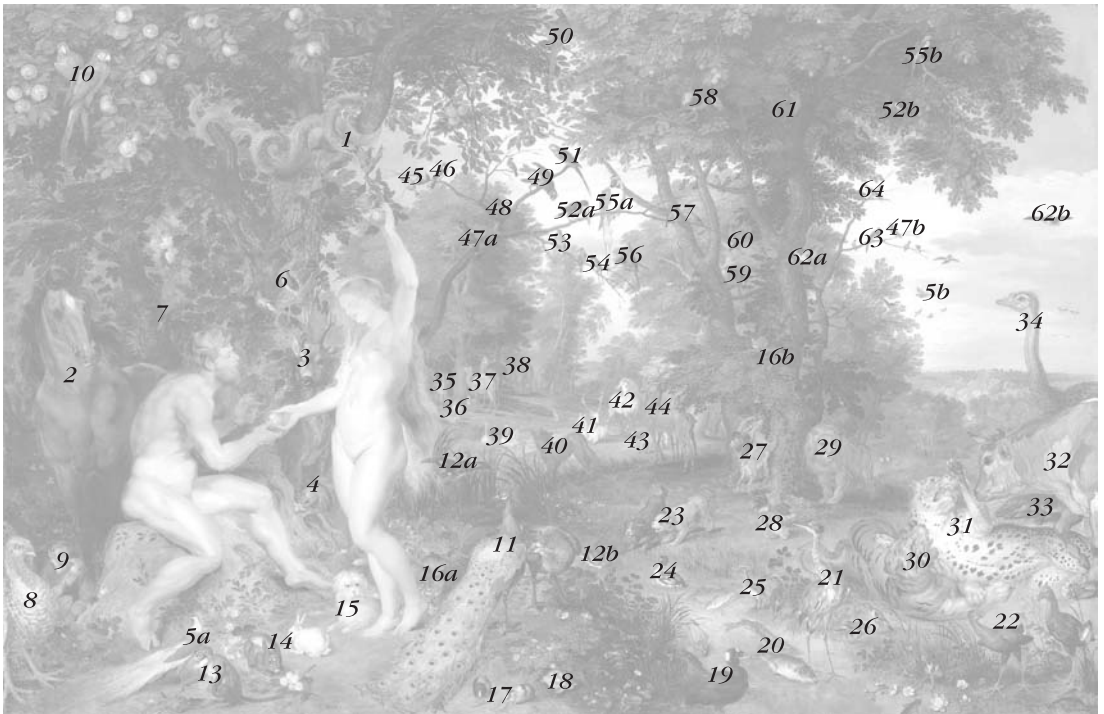
²⁰ This bird is not mentioned in modern handbooks on parrots. I consulted the most recent one: Juniper T. – Parr M., *Parrots. A Guide to the Parrots of the World* (London: 2003).

Exhibiting zoological variety seems to be one of the main concerns of the zoological *convenientia* displayed by Brueghel. The animals placed in the foreground are meant to highlight not only Eden's natural variety, bringing together animals from all continents, but also the painter's knowledge of natural history, which seems to include the most recent discoveries in zoology. The following species are foregrounded (from left to right): a Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) (8) from North America, a Brown Capuchin Monkey (*Cebus apela*) (9) from South America, a Lesser Bird of Paradise (*Paradisea minor*) (5a) from New Guinea, a kind of guenon, the Preuss's Monkey (*Cercopithecus preussi*) (13) from West Africa, two domestic rabbits (14), a couple of peacocks (11) from India, two South American guinea-pigs (17), an unidentified Tortoise (18), a Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) (19),²¹ which is a North American sea duck, four fish species, of which one is a Pike (*Esox lucius*) (20), a Grey Heron (*Ardea cinera*) (21) from Europe, two red and bluish birds (perhaps the Rock Thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*) (26) from Southern Europe),²² some barely detectable amphibians, and two Purple Swamp-hens or Purple Coots (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) (22) from Southern Europe.²³ The animals represent not only a large variety of geographical origins, but also different degrees of up-to-date zoological knowledge and potential symbolic meaning. The most striking topical zoological feature is the representation of the Bird of Paradise: the bird is standing on the ground, thus correcting all preceding pictorial and textual representations of the bird (including Brueghel's own earlier paintings) that represent the bird without feet. This image of a footless bird of paradise was based on the footless skins bought from and prepared by indigenous natives of New Guinea that reached Europe. The subsequent belief that the bird spends its whole life flying in the air and living on dew was featured in all contemporary ornithological treatises. Brueghel therefore seems to underscore the zoological accuracy of his painting by representing another bird of paradise (5b), flying and *with feet*.

²¹ Both monkeys have been identified by Kolb A.F., *Brueghel* 11, the Surf Scoter in Woollett A.T. – van Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 69.

²² This identification is not certain, because the Rock Thrush does not have the blue thigh feathers that Brueghel depicts.

²³ Brueghel's zoological precision (which distinguishes, for instance, five species of parrots, three species of deer and a dozen of European songbirds) necessitates the modern scientific denomination of the animals. The animals mentioned here have been numbered and listed in Figure 3.



The numbers indicate the most important animals depicted.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Serpent | 33. Crocodile |
| 2. Red horse | 34. Ostrich |
| 3. European Roe Deer (<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>) | 35. Llama |
| 4. European Red Squirrel (<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>) | 36. Two sheep |
| 5a and b. Lesser Bird of Paradise (<i>Paradisaea minor</i>) | 37. Two camels |
| 6. Two Red-faced Lovebirds (<i>Agapornis pullarius</i>) | 38. Two elephants |
| 7. Common Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>) | 39. Two Mute Swans (<i>Cygnus olor</i>) |
| 8. Turkey | 40. Wolf |
| 9. Brown Capuchin Monkey (<i>Cebus apela</i>) | 41. Two Fallow Deer (<i>Dama dama</i>) |
| 10. Two Green-winged Macaws (<i>Ara chloroptera</i>) | 42. White horse |
| 11. Two Peacocks | 43. Two pigs |
| 12a and b. Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) | 44. Two Red Deer (<i>Cervus elaphus</i>) |
| 13. Preuss's Monkey (<i>Cercopithecus preussi</i>) | 45. Two Great Tits (<i>Parus major</i>) |
| 14. Two rabbits | 46. Woodchat Shrike (<i>Lanius senator</i>) |
| 15. Little Lion Dog | 47a and b. Hoopoe (<i>Upupa epops</i>) |
| 16a and b. Cat | 48. Little Owl (<i>Athene noctua</i>) |
| 17. Two Guinea pigs | 49. Grey Parrot (<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>) |
| 18. Tortoise | 50. Pheasant (<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>) |
| 19. Surf Scoter (<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>) | 51. Parakeet (<i>Psittacula spec.</i>) |
| 20. Spike (<i>Esox lucius</i>) and some other fishes | 52a and b. Red-billed Toucan (<i>Rhamphastos monilis</i>) |
| 21. Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinera</i>) | 53. Two European Goldfinches (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>) |
| 22. Two Purple Coots (<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>) | 54. Barn Swallow (<i>Hirunda rustica</i>) |
| 23. Two dogs | 55a and b. Blue-and-Yellow Macaw (<i>Ara ararauna</i>) |
| 24. Common Golden Eye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) | 56. Two Glossy Starlings (<i>Lamprolornis spec.</i>) |
| 25. Two snipes (<i>Gallinago spec.</i>) | 57. Two Hawfinches (<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>) |
| 26. Two Rock Thrushes (<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>) | 58. Two Barn Owls (<i>Tyto alba</i>) |
| 27. Two goats | 59. Goshawk or Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipiter gentiles</i> or <i>nisus</i>) |
| 28. Rooster and hen | 60. Bullfinch (<i>Pyrrhulla pyrrhulla</i>) |
| 29. Lion | 61. Eagle Owl (<i>Bubo bubo</i>) |
| 30. Tiger | 62a and b. Great Spotted Woodpecker (<i>Dendrocops major</i>) |
| 31. Leopard or jaguar | 63. Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>) |
| 32. Bull | 64. Golden Oriole (<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>) |

Less striking, but also characteristic of Brueghel's keeping up with zoological information, are the couple of Green-winged Macaws (*Ara chloroptera*) (10). In his *Allegory of Air* (ca. 1611, Rome, Doria Pamphilj Gallery) and in his 1612 *Paradise with the Fall of Man* (Rome, Doria Pamphilj Gallery), Brueghel painted the better-known Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*); in his *Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* he seemed to hesitate between the Green-winged Macaw and the Scarlet Macaw (with yellow instead of green on its wings), whereas he definitively opted for the much rarer Green-winged Macaw in his 1617 *Paradise with the Fall of Man* and in his *Allegory of Air* (1621, Paris, Musée du Louvre), which, by the way, displays a lot of other ornithological innovations (see conclusion).

As for their symbolism, well-known animals like the rabbit, peacock, tortoise and heron can, of course, have specific meanings in the context of the Fall, which newly discovered species do not and cannot have, although here some caution is necessary, especially with regard to the animals near Adam and Eve. Indeed, the bird of paradise is related to the painting's theme simply by its name; the turkey had been attributed some symbolism in recent emblem books; the guinea-pigs, recurring in other paintings of Brueghel, seem to function almost as the painter's signature; while the Capuchin Monkey and the guenon, as *monkeys*, can carry much – predominantly negative – symbolism in the pictorial representation of biblical scenes. These animals show that their function in the painting may not be restricted to one particular zoological or symbolic meaning, but that they are indeed capable of being interpreted in different ways, forcing the viewer to engage in active interpretation.

Rubens's Red Creatures

Like the other paintings that Rubens and Brueghel produced in collaboration, it is Rubens's part which first strikes the spectator's eye. Rubens's contribution has the consequence that, contrary to Brueghel's other painting of the same subject, Adam and Eve are foregrounded, and have changed position with the magnificent white horse (42), which is relegated to the background between other white-coloured animals. What is remarkable in Rubens's contribution is the reddish glow of the painted figures. Adam and Eve are both red-haired (as are a lot of Rubens's figures in other paintings), the shadows on their bodies are

reddish, and so is the ground on which Adam is sitting. Rubens's horse (2) is brown, or rather reddish brown. Brueghel seems to stress this colour, because most of the animals he added in the direct *convenientia* of Adam and Eve are wholly or partly red or reddish. The European Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) (3) between Adam and Eve belongs to the category of *Rotwild* in German, *roodwild* in Dutch; the little animal between Adam's left shin and Eve's right thigh is a European Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) (4); the bird of paradise at Adam's foot (5a) has a red-brown back and wings; the two little parrots (6) between the heads of Adam and Eve are probably Red-faced Lovebirds (*Agapornis pullarius*);²⁴ and the almost imperceptible Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) (7), flying away between the horse's head and Adam's head, shows a flash of blue (the bird's back) and red (its belly). Other partly red, reddish, or (reddish) brown animals are the turkey (8), the Capuchin Monkey (9), the two Green-winged Macaws (*Ara chloptera*) (10), the peacock (11), and the flying Teal (*Anas crecca*) (12a) that Brueghel has painted through the hair of Eve. By adding reddish animals, Brueghel possibly intended to give a symbolic meaning to this colour, which is so common in Rubens's other paintings. In the case of Adam, the colour red may indeed have a specific meaning, because etymologically (in ancient Hebrew) the name 'Adam' means 'man of red earth'. His sitting position on the reddish ground therefore stresses the *convenientia* with the material he has been made of, and to which he will return.

The symbolism of the red-brown horse that Rubens painted is not directly clear. Traditionally, in iconography, the horse can have both positive meanings (faith and virtue) and negative ones (unbridled lust, for instance).²⁵ When Brueghel puts a red-brown roe on the other side of Adam, he probable wants to suggest, by *convenientia*, some symbolic connection between the two animals. Is this connection one of sympathy or antipathy? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to look first at the traditional symbolism of the roe. This animal, in any case, has a positive symbolism: like other members of the deer family – one thinks of Dürer's elk, imitated by Brueghel in the *Garden of Eden*

²⁴ The birds are too small to be identified with certainty. The famous bestiary of Rudolph II contains a painting, representing probably the same birds in the same attitude, and they can definitely be identified as Red-faced Lovebirds. See Haupt H. – Vignau-Wilberg T. – Irblisch E. – Standinger M., *Le Bestiaire de Rodolphe II. Cod. min. 129 et 130 de la Bibliothèque nationale d'Autriche* (Paris: 1990) 330f. (Planche 114)

²⁵ See Dittrich S. and L., *Lexikon der Tiersymbole* 360f.

with the *Fall of Man*, painted in cooperation with Hendrick de Clerck (ca. 1597)²⁶ – the roe is endowed with antlers, which will be discarded, but will grow back again. As such, the animal is a traditional typological symbol of Christ's Death and Resurrection, foreshadowed in the story of Man's Fall.²⁷ Moreover, according to naturalists since Pliny, the animal is in antipathy with the snake. Boillot has three columns based on the antipathy between deer and snake ('i.e. l'ay entortillé de serpens, avec lesquelz il a forte guerre, comme descrit amplement Oppian liure second de la chasse, & en parlent Pline & Elian [...]'). One of these columns is precisely devoted to the antipathy between the roe ('chevreuil') and the snake [Fig. 4]. It goes without saying that, in the context of the Fall, the roe functions as a Christological symbol serving as a counterpart to the Devil-Serpent.

The relationship between roe and horse is probably one of antipathy. The antipathy between deer and horse is not recorded in works of natural history, but their rivalry is a regular theme in fables since Phaedrus (1st century AD). His well-known fable *The Stag, the Horse and the Man* is about a horse which, envious of the beauty of a stag, allows a man to ride on his back in order to catch the deer. The latter escapes, while the horse will stay forever the slave of mankind – 'compelled', as a Neo-Latin version of the fable, translated by Arthur Golding, puts it, 'to lead all his life after most miserably oppressed with intolerable toils and labors'.²⁸ This echoes the toils and labours of Mankind after the Fall. This widely-known version²⁹ links the fable text to Psalm 7.15–16: 'He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate'. It is to the viewer, well versed in the Scriptures, to apply the moral of the fable to the story of Adam and Eve.

In any case, horse and roe seem to be in a relation of antipathy. Therefore, if the roe has a positive meaning, the horse should have a

²⁶ Now in Neuberg an der Donau, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen. See Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 138, who wrongly identify the animal as an 'ass with antlers'.

²⁷ See Bath M., *The Image of the Stag Iconographic Themes in Western Art* (Baden-Baden: 1992), and Dittrich S. and L., *Lexikon der Tiersymbole* 388f.

²⁸ Golding A., *A Moral Fable-Tale* (ed. R.G. Barnes) (San Francisco: 1987) 128f.

²⁹ On this version by Arnoldus Freitag, see my "Arnold Freitag's *Mythologia ethica* (1579) and the tradition of the emblematic fable", in Enenkel K.A.E. – Visser A.S.Q. (eds), *Mundus emblematicus. Studies in Neo-Latin Emblembooks* (Turnhout: 2003) 169–196.



Fig. 4. Antipathy between roe and snake. In Joseph Boillot, *Nouveaux pourtraits et figures de termes pour user en l'architecture* (Langres: 1592), Bibliothèque municipale de Châlons-sur-Marne.

negative one, which can also be seen from the fact that it has, as it were, relegated the positive white horse to the background. The brown horse therefore belongs to the other animals with negative connotations that surround the First Couple: the serpent, the devilish Capuchin Monkey behind Adam, the Red Squirrel between Adam and Eve, and the cat behind Eve's feet.

This is another instance in which the viewer is expected to engage in active interpretation. To do justice to the polyvalence of the painting, it is necessary to adopt a kind of interpretative observation that can be related to some contemporary views on the polyvalence of literary texts. The way in which, for instance, quotations can function in a text, depends not only on the author, but also, and perhaps more, on the reader. As Montaigne put it:

Ny elles [= mes histoires], ny mes allegations ne servent pas tousjours simplement d'exemple, d'autorité ou d'ornement. Je ne les regarde pas seulement par l'usage que j'en tire. Elles portent souvent, hors de mon propos, la semence d'une matiere plus riche et plus hardie, et sonnent à gauche un ton plus delicat, et pour moy qui n'en veux exprimer d'avantage, et pour ceux qui rencontreront mon air.³⁰

Plural textual interpretation is even explicitly compared to the various ways in which you should look at paintings, as claimed by the contemporary writer Béroalde de Verville, whose hermeneutic usefulness has been demonstrated by Mireille Huchon in her edition of Rabelais's *Œuvres*:

Ce qui est practiqué en peinture quand on met en veuë quelque paysage, ou port, ou autre pourtrait qui cependant musse sous soy quelque autre figure que l'on discerne quand on regarde par un certain endroit que le maistre a designé. Et aussi s'exerce par escrit, quand on discourt amplement de sujets plausibles, lesquels envelopent quelques autres excellences qui ne sont cognues que lors qu'on lit par le secret endroit qui descouvre les magnificences occultes à l'apparence commune, mais claires et manifestes à l'œil et à l'entendement qui a receu la lumiere qui fait penetrer dans ces discours proprement impenetrables, et non autrement intelligibles.³¹

³⁰ Montaigne M. de, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Thibaudet A. – Rat M. (Paris: 1962) 245 (*Essais* I, 40). Montaigne, who was much read in the intellectual circles of Rubens, will be referred to regularly in the course of this article. For his importance, see Smith P.J. and Enenkel A.E.K. (eds), *Montaigne and the Low Countries (1580–1700)* (Leiden: 2007).

³¹ Béroalde de Verville cited in Rabelais F., *Œuvres* 1042. Béroalde de Verville's hermeneutic is plural, but directed and somehow restricted by the painter/author, whereas Montaigne seems to claim complete interpretative freedom.

Logically speaking, then, painting, in its turn, should be regarded in a literary way. This literary reading of the painting as an open text, especially with regard to the numerous (self-)quotations it contains, will be followed in the next sections of this article.

The Other Animals Around Adam and Eve

The relations of antipathy between snake and roe, as well as horse and roe, invite us to question further the concept of natural antipathy in the context of Paradise, and to search for other cases of natural antipathy and symbolic contrast in the direct *convenientia* of the First Couple. The most evident example is the contrasting pair of the dog and the cat at Eve's feet, alluding to the proverb 'fighting like cats and dogs' known in many languages. This pair reminds us of other pairs of contrasting animals in a comparable position. One thinks, of course, of Dürer's engraving *The Fall of Man* (1504) which displays a cat and a mouse, silently facing each other, connected by their tails to respectively Eve's and Adam's feet, and waiting for the inevitable Fall, which will cause an outburst of violence between Eden's creatures. The antipathy between cat and mouse is also proverbial ('playing cat and mouse'), and fits in with another proverbial contrasting pair of animals present in the iconography of the Fall: a monkey and a cat, which in *The Fall* by Frans Pourbus and *The Fall* by Cornelis van Haarlem seem to express comparable proverbial material. There is a well known Middle French proverb 'c'est beau jeu que de chat et singe', which is at the origin of some proverbs like 'use a cat's paw' to 'pull the chestnuts out of the fire' – proverbs widely known in most European countries.³²

Whereas the cat in the iconography of the Fall always has a negative symbolism, Brueghel's dog clearly is a positive symbol by its white colour, like the other white and light-coloured animals with a positive connotation seen in the background in the middle of the picture. The dog's attentive attitude can be seen as a reversed quotation of Brueghel's own imitation (1604) of Dürer's watercolour, entitled *Madonna with a Multitude of Animals* (1503). Lying at the feet of the Virgin, a dog of the same race, known as Little Lion Dog, has been rendered, not alert and attentive, but in a comfortable slumber. Indeed, in proximity to

³² See Dawes E., "Pulling the Chestnuts out of the Fire", in Houwen L.A.J.R. (ed.), *Animals and the Symbolic in Mediaeval Art and Literature* (Groningen: 1997) 155–169.

the Holy Child (also symbolised by a Stag Beetle [*Lucanus cervus*]), there is no immediate need to be alert: the negative owls, recognisable as a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and an Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), are hidden,³³ and the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) (traditionally the symbol of the Devil) is not menacing. Thus the Lion Dog in Brueghel's *Paradise* forms the iconological link between Man's Fall and Christ's Nativity.

Another animal in the immediate neighbourhood of Adam and Eve that calls for a symbolic interpretation is the Red Squirrel. According to the *Lexikon der Tiersymbole*, this rodent often has a negative connotation, especially in the iconography of the Fall. The *Lexikon* mentions Michiel Coxcie's *Fall* (ca. 1550) and Maerten de Vos's painting on the same subject (1569), in which the squirrel symbolises sexual lust.³⁴

The rodent cracking a nut belongs to a group of other eating and gnawing animals in the vicinity of the First Couple. One of the rabbits is sniffing at the plums, which have probably fallen from the Tree of Life. The guenon (13) reaches for some other fruit. The other monkey, the Capuchin Monkey (9) is also eating a piece of fruit, but this one clearly comes from the Tree of Knowledge. All these are like the animals of Aesopian fable: in spite of their 'brute' animal nature, they edify the human reader/viewer with an invitation to follow their example: eating the right fruit. The two monkeys in particular, instead of imitating, ask to be imitated, for good (the guenon) or evil (the Capuchin Monkey).

These active little animals give airiness to the dramatic scene of the Fall. This also holds for the two small Red-faced Lovebirds (6). The same couple of lovebirds has been depicted in other paintings by Brueghel, but here they seem to mimic humorously the attitudes of the sitting Adam and the standing Eve. Although their scientific name – *agapornis*, meaning 'love' (*agape*) and 'bird' (*ornis*) and their names in

³³ The same species of owl figure in the Tree of Life in the Rubens-Brueghel painting (58 and 60); there they are not hidden, and possibly do not (yet) have a negative connotation.

³⁴ Dittrich S. and L., *Lexikon der Tiersymbole* 73–76. However, a more positive meaning is not excluded. In her *Dictionary of Omens and Superstitions*, Philippa Waring tells a folktale about a squirrel which witnessed Adam and Eve eating the "Forbidden Fruit" in the Garden of Eden. "The squirrel was so horrified at this affront to God's law that he drew his tail – which was small and thin (more akin to non-sciurid rodents) at the time – over his eyes and was rewarded by having it transformed into the impressive brush that adorns modern day tree squirrels" (<http://www.wildlifeonline.me.uk/squirrels.html>, consulted January 26, 2007). This could be the reason why only half of the tail of Brueghel's squirrel can be seen.

French (*Inséparables*) and German (*Unzertrennlichen*) – because of the common belief that at the death of the one, the other would soon die – seem to date from the eighteenth century, their loving character and inseparability were certainly known earlier, for the bird was widely known in Europe and was kept as a pet from the 1560s on.

These parrots and the two Green-winged Macaws (10) in the left corner of the painting seem to symbolise love. This is not only confirmed by modern handbooks of iconography (which never fail to mention the positive symbolism of the Ring-necked Parakeet in Dürer's *Fall*), but also by contemporary zoological works. According to Aldrovandi, this bird only knows sympathy; it is in fact the only animal without any antipathy to other animals. This observation, however, is contradicted by the illustration provided by Aldrovandi, showing a parrot in panic because of a snake approaching its nest [Fig. 5].³⁵ This natural enmity between parrots and snakes may well explain why Brueghel placed the birds in the immediate *convenientia* of the serpent.

There are some other animals near Adam and Eve with a traditional symbolic meaning too. Contrary to the mainly negative connotations given to the turkey by the *Lexikon der Tiersymbole* (541–546), Brueghel's radiant turkey probably has a positive meaning (like the white one depicted in Cornelis van Haarlem's *Fall* next to the divine cloud). It probably symbolises peacefulness and tolerance, a meaning attested in the so-called emblematic fable books since 1567, illustrated by Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder and published in Dutch, French, Latin and German.³⁶ The Kingfisher (7) flying away from Adam is traditionally a positive symbol of resurrection in a theological context, and of renewal of Nature, and here certainly signifies the imminent disappearance of the prelapsarian, halcyon era.³⁷ The two rabbits (14) are to be interpreted

³⁵ Aldrovandi, *Ornithologiae* I 653. This large nest made of twigs proves that the parrot represented is probably a Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) from South America. For a hand-coloured version of this illustration, see http://diglib.cib.unibo.it/diglib.php?inv=26&int_ptnum=&term_ptnum=677&format=jpg&comment=0&zoom=&x=2&y=7 (last consulted April 11, 2007). The overall green colour of the bird corresponds to the colour of the Monk Parakeet.

³⁶ Smith P.J., "Fable and Emblem in *The Fall of Man* (1592) by Cornelis van Haarlem", in Manning J. – Porteman K. – Van Vaecck M. (eds), *The Emblem Tradition in the Low Countries* (Turnhout: 1999) 281–302 (285).

³⁷ Dittrich S. and L., *Lexikon der Tiersymbole*, 84–88. See Harms W., "Der Eisvogel und die halcyonischen Tage. Zum Verhältnis von naturkundlicher Beschreibung und allegorischer Naturdeutung", *Verbum et signum* (Munich: 1975) I 477–515.



Fig. 5. Antipathy between parakeet and snake. In Ulisse Aldrovandi, *Ornithologiae, hoc est de avibus historiae libri XII* (Bologna: 1599) I 653, Leiden University Library.

much less univocally because of their very polyvalent symbolism. The white rabbit certainly has a positive meaning; the dark one may have a negative connotation, and as a pair connected with the First Couple just before the Fall, they may signify love, balancing between true love (white) and sinful lust (black).

Although plants are outside the scope of this article, there is one piece of botanical symbolism that is relevant here: the white grapes that can be seen in the Tree of Knowledge. These grapes are probably to be interpreted in contrast to the wild vine, visible on the right side (the 'bad' side) of *The Fall* by Cornelis van Haarlem. The latter lacks two things: it has no grapes, thus symbolising the unfruitful wilderness after Paradise, and it has no tree or branch for support. As can be seen from Alciato's emblem *Amicitia etiam post mortem durans* ('Friendship lasting even beyond death'), the theme of the vine winding around a supporting tree symbolises friendship. Accordingly, Cornelis's wild vine, vainly in search of support, seems to foreshadow the loveless condition of Mankind after the Fall. By contrast, Brueghel's full grapes, supported by the Tree of Knowledge, symbolise not only prelapsarian richness, but also durable friendship and cooperation, one of the painting's main themes, as we shall see.

As our view moves away from Adam and Eve, animal symbolism becomes less compelling. Animals which traditionally have an outspoken symbolism in the pictorial representation of the Fall, such as the peacock (11), wolf (40), tortoise (18), pig (43), lion (29), etc., seem to be devoid here of any specific symbolism because they are mingled with animals that are too recently discovered or too exotic to have any symbolism at all (for instance, the llama [35], sea duck [19], golden eye [24], etc.). With the exception of the light-coloured animals in the background, all these animals call for a different, non-symbolic approach.

The Other Animals

At first sight these other animals are grouped according to the three animal kingdoms: aquatic, terrestrial and celestial. This grouping coincides with the three elements water, earth and air. The fourth element, fire, is apparently lacking here, just as it was lacking in Brueghel's *Allegory of the Elements* (1604). 'Interestingly, Brueghel does not depict any symbols of fire, such as the salamander and torch traditionally held by the deity, in this case Vesta', as Ariane Faber Kolb rightly

observes on the subject of the *Allegory of the Elements*.³⁸ The reason for the absence of fire can be explained by current ideas on cosmology: according to Heraclitus's cosmology, which was well known among Renaissance philosophers,³⁹ fire is everywhere because it is the material of the soul and the principle of life. According to Zeno of Citium, fire is the creative power in Nature. This idea is quoted by Montaigne: 'S'enquiert-on à Zenon que c'est que nature? "Un feu, dict-il, artiste, propre à engendrer, procédant réglément"'⁴⁰ – a quotation that one of Montaigne's first readers, Pieter van Veen, brother of Otto Vaenius and a correspondent of Rubens, Lipsius and many others, underlined and illustrated with an ink drawing in the margins of his personal copy of Montaigne's *Essais*.⁴¹ According to these philosophies, all of the creatures of Rubens and Brueghel that are so full of life are all automatically emanations of fire.

It is interesting to note that the three animals kingdoms and the corresponding elements are not represented as closed, impermeable sets. Thus the bird of paradise, a conventional symbol of the air, is represented here both sitting on the ground (5a; bottom left) and flying (5b; top right). The Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) (50), a bird that lives on the ground, is perched here higher than any other bird; monkeys are on the ground instead of climbing in a tree (as in Brueghel's *Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* and in his *Paradise* of 1612); and the fishes are depicted as if lying or creeping on earth, whereas the two teals are represented one swimming, the other flying. There are some other reversals: contrary to their 'normal', postlapsarian behaviour, the nocturnal owls are not afraid to show themselves in daylight, and they are not mobbed by the 'other, smaller birds', mentioned by Erasmus's *Ephorinus*. The two woodpeckers (61 a and b) are flying instead of adopting their typical tree-climbing position, and the Barn Swallow (*Hirunda rustica*) (54), which is sitting instead of flying, shows a similar reversal of its usual behaviour. The Surf Scoter (19) is a sea duck, it is here swimming

³⁸ Kolb A.F., *The Entry* 53.

³⁹ As we can read in Montaigne's *Essais*: 'Heraclitus établissoit le monde estre composé par feu et, l'ordre des destinées, se devoir enflammer et resoudre en feu quelque jour, et quelque jour encore renaître' (Montaigne M. de, *Œuvres* 556).

⁴⁰ Montaigne M. de, *Œuvres* 516.

⁴¹ See Kolfin E. – Rikken M., "A Very personal Copy: Pieter van Veen's illustrations to Montaigne's *Essais*", in Smith P.J. – Enenkel K.A.E. (eds.), *Montaigne and the Low Countries 1580–1700* (Leiden: 2007) fig. 8 (p. 252).

in fresh water, and therefore the only species to represent marine life in a freshwater environment.⁴²

In their arrangement the animals also underline their different origins. The four continents come together in Paradise. This is especially clear in the case of the birds: common European species are intermingled with exotic species from the three other continents. In two cases the animals represented seem to form a triangle involving the three 'exotic' continents: in the middle of the picture the three species of parrots, which seem to be in interaction, represent Africa (the Grey Parrot [*Psittacus erithacus*][49]), America (the Blue-and-Yellow Macaw [*Ara ararauna*][55a]) and Asia (the *Psittacula* species) (51). The other triangle, combining the three big cats on the right (lion (29), tiger (30) and leopard (31) – or is it a jaguar, as suggested by the *Lexikon der Tiersymbole*?⁴³ – has a much more polyvalent significance. First, because this triangle combines three quotations from Rubens: the lion originates from his *Daniel in the Lion's Den* (ca. 1613, Washington, National Gallery of Art), the tiger comes from his *Education of Bacchus by Silenus* (ca. 1610, Ithaca, College Medical School), and the leopard comes from his (lost) *Leopards*. This combination of Rubens quotations not only implies a homage to Rubens, a token of their collaboration (just like the white horse in the background),⁴⁴ but is also a sign of Brueghel's own dispositional virtuosity: in quoting the three animals from Rubens and in combining them, he succeeds in giving them a new significance which they did not have before in Rubens's original paintings.⁴⁵ If indeed the leopard is a jaguar, the three

⁴² This is also the function of the two gulls in the foreground of the *Paradise with the Fall of Man* by Roelant Savery and Cornelis van Haarlem (1618), who were visibly inspired by the Rubens and Brueghel painting.

⁴³ 'In Allegorien von Rubens bzw. von Rubens und Mitarbeitern taucht auch der in Süd- und Mittelamerika vorkommende Jaguar (*Panthera onca*) auf. [...] Rubens könnte den von ihm außerordentlich realistisch wiedergegebenen Jaguar 1603 bei seinem Besuch am Hofe des spanischen Königs Philipp III. in Valladolid in dessen Menagerie gesehen und studiert haben. Dass seinem scharfen Auge die morphologischen Unterschiede zum Leoparden und die andersartige Fleckenzeichnung nicht aufgefallen wären, ist kaum anzunehmen. Er hat den Jaguar sicher bewusst in sein Oeuvre aufgenommen' (*Lexikon der Tiersymbole* 282–283).

⁴⁴ On this horse, see Kolb A.F., *The Entry* 65–74.

⁴⁵ This corresponds to Montaigne's playful practice of quoting: 'Parmy tant d'emprunts je suis bien aise d'en pouvoir desrober quelqu'un, les desguisant et diffonnant à nouveau service' (II, 12, [...]) and 'je luy donne quelque particuliere adresse de ma main' (II, 12, idem), 'pour d'autant plus me dire' (I, 26, 148). As observed by Mary McKinley, '[Montaigne] fait subir à la citation une transformation et une assimilation partielle, mais en les laissant retenir leur caractère autre'; McKinley M., "Citations", in Desan P. (ed.), *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne* (Paris: 2004) 168–170.

big cats form a triangle in interaction, comparable to the three parrots: the African lion watches the Asian tiger and the South American jaguar playing. Moreover, as we shall see in more detail, by *convenientia* these animals are also related to the surrounding animals by way of sympathy and antipathy.

Indeed, the most obvious aspect of the arrangement of the animals lies in their mutual sympathy. This sympathy is suggested by the fact that a number of animals are depicted in close pairs: the rabbits, macaws, lovebirds, guinea-pigs and purple coots, but also the Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*) (44), Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*) (41), he-goat and she-goat (27), and birds like the Great Tit (*Parus major*) (45), the European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) (53), the snipes (*Gallinago spec.*) (25), the glossy starlings (*Lamprolornis spec.*) (56), the Barn Owl (58), the Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*) (57), etc. The case of the two birds of paradise invites the viewer to search for a counterpart for each solitary bird in the picture. This active way of looking at the painting proves to be successful in the cases of the Blue-and-Yellow Macaw (55 a and b), the Red-billed Toucan (*Rhamphastos monilis*) (52 a and b), the Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) (47 a and b), the Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocops major*) (61 a and b), and the Magpie (*Pica pica*) (62 a and b) but is unsuccessful in many cases, such as the heron (21), the Woodchat Shrike (*Lanius senator*) (46), the Goshawk (or Sparrow hawk) (*Accipiter gentiles* or *nisus*) (59), the Eagle Owl (60), two of the three species of duck (the Common Goldeneye [*Bucephala clangula*] and the Surf Scoter)⁴⁶ and the fishes. The same goes for the mammals: some are single, others are in close or detached pairs (like the horse [2 and 42], the cat [5a and b]). This is all the more remarkable because a number of the mammals appeared in pairs in Brueghel's other great animal paintings, like *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* and his *Paradise* of 1612. This relative singleness makes it possible for Brueghel to place his animals in such a way as to suggest the mutual antipathies, which will oppose the species to one another after the Fall.

⁴⁶ In fact, the third species, the Teal, is represented by two males.

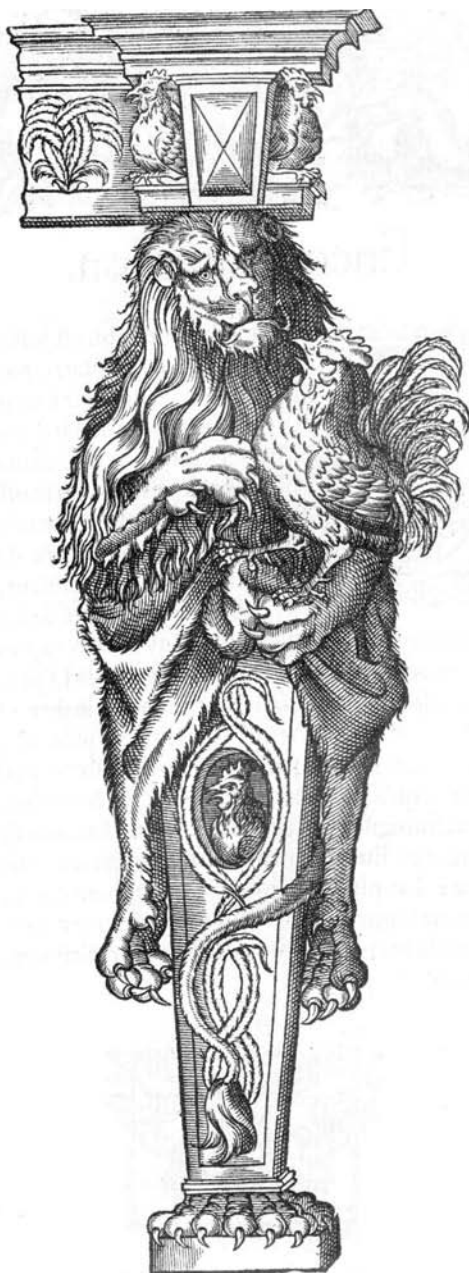


Fig. 6. Antipathy between lion and rooster. In Joseph Boillot, *Nouveaux pourtraitz et figures de termes pour user en l'architecture* (Langres: 1592), Bibliothèque municipale de Châlons-sur-Marne.

Let us take a closer look. The predator is often depicted in close *convenientia* with its future prey: the heron and the pike are surrounded by fishes, the goshawk is perched between the songbirds, the jaguar and tiger are playing with the bull (32). In the case of the two dogs (23) this produces a comic scene: they are both barking at two ducks, which do not fly away, but quack back at them.

There are, however, more occult forms of (latent) antipathy. The most famous one is the antipathy between the lion (29) and the rooster (28). This antipathy, well known since Antiquity, is commented upon by Boillot [Fig. 6] as follows:

Et entre les oyseaux c'est chose esmerueillable de la crainte & horreur qu'ha le Lion du coq exprimé en ceste figure, principalement lors qu'il chante, ce que Pline tesmoigne en deux endroitz, Elian & assez d'aultres, quelques vns m'ont dict auoir veu presenter vne chieure a vn Lion, qui monstra lors contenance d'en este fort effrayé.

It is therefore not surprising that the animals represented in the immediate *convenientia* of the lion are precisely the goat and the rooster, from which the lion looks away. It is interesting to note that in his painting of the Fall (between 1635 and 1644) Simon de Vos, one of Brueghel's imitators, represented a lion facing a white rooster in front of Adam and Eve.⁴⁷

Another case of antipathy mentioned by Boillot is between the bull (32) and the crocodile (33), painted one next to the other by Brueghel. Boillot comments: 'Je l'ay attaché & comme saisy d'un Crocodile ennemy du Bubale, cest a dire beuf sauvage, selon Albert [Albertus Magnus], qui l'a pris d'Auicenne' [Fig. 7]. This suggests that Brueghel's juxtaposition of both animals is not arbitrary.

Boillot mentions another interesting case of antipathy, between goat and owls, 'des chouettes ou chatz huans [= cat-owl] oyseaux a luy fort contraires'. [Fig. 8] It therefore comes as no surprise that Brueghel's goat (27) stands against the Tree of Life, which contains three owls (58 and 60) and one cat (16b).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See *Het Aards Paradijs. Dierenvoorstellungen in de Nederlanden van de 16de en 17de eeuw*, exh. cat., Antwerp Zoo (Antwerp: 1982) 100.

⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that in his *Paradise* of 1612, Brueghel depicted the same he-goat standing against the Tree of Life, devoid of owls. The only owls in this painting are sitting in another tree, left in the painting.



Fig. 7. Antipathy between bull and crocodile. In Joseph Boillot, *Nouveaux pourtraitz et figures de termes pour user en l'architecture* (Langres: 1592), Bibliothèque municipale de Châlons-sur-Marne.



Fig. 8. Antipathy between goat and owl. In Joseph Boillot, *Nouveaux pourtraits et figures de termes pour user en l'architecture* (Langres: 1592), Bibliothèque municipale de Châlons-sur-Marne.



Fig. 9. Antipathy between horse and ostrich. In Joseph Boillot, *Nouveaux pourtraitz et figures de termes pour user en l'architecture* (Langres: 1592), Bibliothèque municipale de Châlons-sur-Marne.

About the ostrich Boillot observes:

Quant a l'austruche que iay icy peinte & attachee au Cheual, Je n'ay pas encores autheur qui m'ayt appris qu'elle lui soit ennemie, sinon Cardan: avec vne ressemblance que cet oyseau a avec le Chameau duquel le Cheual ne peult souffrir le regard, tant il l'abhorre [Fig. 9].

As can be seen from the changing colouring of the ostrich's neck (34), through which the horizon on which it is painted is visible, Brueghel painted this bird on an already dry background at the very last moment, 'perhaps as an afterthought'.⁴⁹ In doing so, he may have wanted to suggest an antipathy with the brown horse (2), an antipathy traversing the painting horizontally (just as the sympathy *à distance* between the two birds of paradise crosses the painting diagonally): the head of the ostrich seems indeed to face the horse on the other side of the painting. Interestingly, in his representation of the Fall, De Vos depicts the other case of antipathy mentioned by Boillot, between camel and horse: these animals are placed together in such a way that they seem to be afraid to look at each other. Furthermore, it is particularly relevant that all the antipathies mentioned above are absent in Brueghel's other depictions of the Fall, although most of the animals themselves are reused, often in the same attitude.

The White Animals in the Distance

The only group of animals with a clear positive symbolism are the white and light-coloured animals that Brueghel painted in the background, either as a pair (Mute Swans [*Cygnus olor*] [39], sheep [36], camels [37], Fallow Deer [*Dama dama*] [41]) or alone (the white horse [42] and the llama [35]). This positive disposition reminds us of Brueghel's *Paradise* of 1612 and once again of Cornelis van Haarlem's *Fall*. Cornelis's painting features on the left side a number of white-coloured animals surrounding the scene of Adam's creation. Brueghel has the idea of changing Cornelis's narrative disposition and moving it from the left background to the centre background of the painting, making use of some perspective effects. This landscape 'that recedes into the far distance' is something proper to Brueghel, as Arianne Faber Kolb remarked

⁴⁹ Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 238.

on his *Madonna with a Multitude of Animals*.⁵⁰ In his *Fall* the viewer's gaze is drawn to the background until it stops at the biggest terrestrial animal: the elephant (38), only visible as two vague shadows. The elephant in the background is a recurrent theme in the pictorial representation of the Fall. It occurs in the *Fall* by Maarten de Vos (1569), and in those by later artists such as Simon de Vos and of course Rembrandt (1638). In the case of the etching by Rembrandt, who transforms the snake into a dragon, the elephant's significance is also explicable from the viewpoint of natural antipathy. As we saw in Boillot [Fig. 1], elephant and dragon are in eternal enmity, a phenomenon recorded in all zoological works since Pliny. Rembrandt's interpretation of the theme shows us once again the success of the concepts of sympathy and antipathy – starting with Dürer, continued by Cornelis van Haarlem and Brueghel, and finding an artistic climax in Rembrandt's *Fall*.

Conclusions

The painting presents itself as a reflexion on the way animals should be rendered in the pictorial representation of Eden. This has to do with a much-debated theological problem, and with an even more fundamental question, which Rubens and Brueghel simply pass over: were there any animals in Eden during the Fall?⁵¹ Artists have found very different solutions for the rendering of the prelapsarian fauna of Eden. In his *Garden of Delights* (between 1500 and 1504) Hieronymus Bosch depicts the animals before the Fall in a very heightened sympathy and antipathy: for instance, the unicorn (left) is in sympathy with the other animals drinking, which it has preceded in order to clean the water and chase away the poisonous reptiles with its purifying horn. These venomous animals are represented crawling out of the water on the right side of the painting. Another example of antipathy is Bosch's cat holding a mouse in its jaws. At roughly the same time, Albrecht Dürer found a different way to render the animals' nature before the Fall: he represented their future antipathies by putting them face to

⁵⁰ Kolb A.F., *The Entry* 44.

⁵¹ The book Genesis remains silent about this subject; it only mentions the snake. For a discussion of this debate, see Van de Velde C., "Het Aards Paradijs in de beeldende kunsten", in anon. (ed.), *Het Aards Paradijs. Dierenvoorstellingen in de Nederlanden van de 16de en 17de eeuw* (Antwerp: 1982) 17–34 (23–24).

face in a state of resigned, immobile apathy. Cornelis van Haarlem, on the contrary, put them in an alert attitude that makes them focus not only on each other, but also on the extra-pictorial viewer. Other painters, from Lucas van Leiden to Nicolas Poussin, preferred to depict a Paradise completely or almost completely devoid of animals. In this rich iconographic tradition, Brueghel and Rubens had the original idea of arranging the animals in such a way as to suggest their future love and strife.

More generally, with regard to the development of Brueghel's *oeuvre* as a whole, the themes introduced in the *Fall* by Rubens and Brueghel appear to be of crucial importance in Brueghel's subsequent works. This can be seen in his *Allegory of Air* (1621), which, contrary to the 1611 version of the theme, displays the same interest in zoological topicality and sympathy/antipathy. Like the 1617 *Fall*, the 1621 *Allegory of Air* depicts two birds of paradise, but here they are both represented sitting. Likewise, the number of the five species of parrots depicted in the 1617 *Fall* is increased with five other, spectacularly coloured species,⁵² and left and right from the centre there are a couple of Crowned Cranes (*Balearica pavonina*) and a couple of Magellan Penguins (*Spheniscus magellanicus*). Brueghel's depiction of these birds can be seen as a correction to the authoritative *Exoticorum libri decem* (1605) by Carolus Clusius, who was not able to determine the Crowned Crane and who was the first to mention a penguin, but described it in an unsatisfactory way.⁵³ Most significantly, both penguins are put in *convenientia* with a bat breastfeeding two young bats. By this juxtaposition Brueghel seems to echo the contemporary debate on the correct classification of penguins and bats: are they real birds? Penguins indeed cannot fly, and have hairy feathers; bats can fly, but have no feathers, they are breastfeeding and viviparous. The latter characteristic is underscored by the two bird eggs, visible on the other side from the middle, to the left of the Crowned Cranes. Besides the topical zoological details displayed in the painting, one notes the same thematic importance of sympathy and antipathy

⁵² One recognises a Yellow-headed Amazon (*Amazona oratrix*), a Senegal Parrot (*Poicephalus senegalus*), two Yellow-crested Cockatoos (*Cacatua sulphurea*), a Black-capped Lory (*Lorius lory*), a Canary-winged Parakeet (*Brotogeris versicolurus*) and a Blue-fronted Amazon (*Amazona aestiva*) – the same specimen that occurs in Brueghel's *Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*.

⁵³ Clusius C., *Exoticorum libri decem, quibus animalium, plantarum, aromatum aliorumque peregrinorum fructuum historiae describuntur* (Antwerp: 1605). The bizarre way Brueghel depicted the penguin's feet proves that he used some awkwardly stuffed animals as models.

as in the *Fall* by Rubens and Brueghel. Whereas sympathy and serene harmony seem to reign in most parts of the painting, its centre is full of movement and conflict. The light falls on two Mute Swans arguing with a Grey Heron, and two enormous Eagle-owls (symbol of darkness), of which one has caught a rooster (a universal symbol of the sun)⁵⁴ and a hen – a scene watched by a (nocturnal) Barn Owl and a shining, light-coloured Yellow-crested Cockatoo. The middle also deploys another rooster, fighting with a turkey, and another heron in the air in conflict with a kind of eagle⁵⁵ – a conflict reflected in the air by another heron and eagle, left high in the picture. For the presence of all these themes, the 1621 *Allegory of Air* can be seen as a step following logically from the 1617 *Fall* by Rubens and Brueghel.

With Erasmus's *Amicitia* at the back of our minds, we can ask ourselves whether the numerous allusions to sympathy, and the recurrent quotations of Rubens, imply an allusion to the 'working friendship' between both artists. It is noteworthy that this collaborative painting is the only one signed by both painters, and probably even with paint from the same palette.⁵⁶ One thinks once again of Montaigne, perhaps not his ideas on ideal friendship⁵⁷ but rather his ideas on conversation: ideally the two partners in a conversation should be emulative, spurring each other on to greater heights. In his essay "De l'art de conférer", Montaigne compares the ideal conversation with sports such as fencing and wrestling: 'Elle n'est pas assez vigoureuse et genereuse, si elle n'est querelleuse [...] Si je confere avec une ame forte et un roide jousteur, il me presse les flancs, me pique à gauche et à dextre; ses imaginations eslancent les miennes'.⁵⁸ And, interestingly, Montaigne mentions in one breath the meanings of the word *amicitia* displayed by Erasmus: conversation, friendship, love: 'J'ayme une société et familiarité forte et virile, une amitié qui se flatte en l'aspreté et vigueur de son com-

⁵⁴ Chevalier J. – Gheerbrant A., *Dictionnaire des symboles* (Paris: 1982) 281: 'Le coq est universellement un symbole solaire, parce que son chant annonce le lever du soleil'.

⁵⁵ Both conflicts are more or less conventional: a rooster attacking a turkey is a theme in the emblematic fable book in the tradition of Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder; the other theme is often depicted in scenes of hawking.

⁵⁶ Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 66.

⁵⁷ See Honig E., "Paradise Regained" 279: 'The kind of friendship that resulted in collaboration was not, I think, Montaignesque. While the parties had to trust one another's artistic integrity, it mattered that their thoughts – *not* be so fully shared'. Honig rightly mentions the possible influence of Guazzo's much read *Art of Civil Conversation*, which is, by the way, also one of Montaigne's sources.

⁵⁸ See Montaigne M. de, *Œuvres* 902 and 900 (III 8, "De l'art de conférer").

merce, comme l'amour, és morsures et esgratigneures sanglantes.⁵⁹ The word *commerce* in Montaigne's *Essais* never loses its original mercantile connotation,⁶⁰ and is therefore applicable to the 'working friendship' between Rubens and Brueghel, forcing each to outdo the other, and resulting in a product both mercantile and highly artistic.

These multiple layers of meaning (zoological topicality, sympathy and antipathy, animal symbolism, friendship, collaboration and emulation) are especially clear when one compares the painting with Brueghel's earlier *Paradise* (1612). This painting displays a lot of the same animals, in harmonious sympathy, but without the suggestion of their future antipathy, and with less zoological topicality and much less animal symbolism around the First Couple. Our painting therefore necessitates almost a 'close reading', like the one suggested by the painter and art critic Arnold Houbraken, one of the first (1718) to write about the painting:

The most outstanding in art that I have seen by him [Brueghel] is the so-called paradise at Mr. De la Court van der Voort's in Leiden, in which a multitude of diverse animals appear in the most ingenious way in a landscape painted no less ingeniously, with Adam and Eve rendered in the greatest of detail by Rubens.⁶¹

Houbraken's reaction to another collaborative work by Rubens and Brueghel, the now lost *Vertumnus and Pomona*, suggests how he 'read' the painting: observing it for hours, 'without being satisfied'. It is to this detailed, painstaking close reading that the *Fall* by Rubens and Brueghel invites us.

⁵⁹ Montaigne M. de, *Œuvres* 902.

⁶⁰ See Desan P., "Commerce", in Desan P. (ed.), *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne* (Paris: 2004) 185f.

⁶¹ Quoted in Woollett A.T. – Suchtelen A. van, *Rubens & Brueghel* 64.

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DIZZYING VISIONS.
ST. TERESA OF JESUS AND THE EMBODIED
VISUAL IMAGE

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With the loss of bodily control come more powerful ways of seeing – or so it is suggested by a remarkable engraving [Fig. 1] produced in Rome by the French printmaker François Spierre in the 1660's. The Spanish Carmelite reformer and writer Teresa of Jesus (1515–1582) is shown in a pose that recalls her many accounts of struggling with her physicality as she entered a visionary state: body twisting around while seated, head rolling back, arm outstretched as if loosing all sense of her surroundings. It is telling that unlike most images of mystics, St. Teresa does not look directly at the vision itself, a frenzied scene of death and destruction played out for the viewer behind her. A still discernible contour to the right of the saint suggests that her pose was altered and that initially she faced the scene of massacre. Now she spins backwards and upwards, pulled towards a glow of white light that gently filters through the dark clouds. The white light does nothing to dispel the strong shadow cast over St. Teresa's eyes by the surmounting cloud, indicating that whatever its effects, these do not pertain to the sense of sight.

As her reflective writings indicate, St. Teresa sought to disassociate visionary experience from the physical act of seeing, and for this very reason she offers remarkable accounts of alternative ways of seeing. To quote some typical examples:

The kind of vision about which your Reverence asked me is as follows. She sees nothing, either inwardly or outwardly, for the vision is not imaginary. Yet without seeing anything, the soul understands what it is, and it is pictured to her more clearly than if she were to see it, save that no exact picture is presented to her. It is as if a person were to feel that another is close beside her; and though, because of the darkness, he cannot be seen, she knows for certain that he is there [...].¹

¹ St. Teresa of Jesus, *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, trans. and ed. E.A. Peers, vol. 1 (London: 1946) 326 (Relations, IV).



Fig. 1. François Spierre, *St. Teresa's Vision of the 40 Jesuit Martyrs*, engraving, ca. 1660.

He grants a clear revelation of His sacred Humanity [...] and although He does this so quickly that we might liken the action to a flash of lightning, this most glorious image is so deeply engraven upon the imagination that I do not believe it can possibly disappear until it is seen where it can be enjoyed to all eternity. I speak of an 'image' but it must not be supposed that one looks at it as at a painting; it is really alive, and sometimes even speaks to the soul [...]. The brilliance of this vision is like that of infused light or of a sun covered with some material of the transparency of a diamond, if such a thing could be woven. Almost invariably the soul on which God bestows this favour remains in rapture, because its unworthiness cannot endure so terrible a sight. I say 'terrible' because though the sight is the loveliest and most delightful imaginable, even by a person who lived and strove to imagine it for a thousand years, because it so far exceeds all that our imagination and understanding can compass, its presence is of such exceeding majesty that it fills the soul with a great terror.²

For St. Teresa, a true vision is not a sensory experience but when she tries to describe it, she turns to sensory sensations, ones that leave her less rather than more capable of comprehending the experience. To convey the momentary and disturbing character of her visions, she frequently likens them to bolts of lightning or to the oblique luminosity of dazzling light. Even when the vision is over, she acknowledges that its intensity and incompleteness leave her strangely unsettled. In sum, the vision induces both the greatest delight and the greatest terror because it is outside the usual forms of knowing through the senses and thus beyond knowledge that can be accumulated and understood.

In Spierre's print, the crucial link between heightened vision and loss of bodily sensory control spills over to the vision itself, which becomes a chaotic scene of violent death lacking the clarity of stable time and space. Indeed, the bodies that falter, sway and fall into a state of collapse are those of 40 Jesuit missionaries who met their violent deaths as they travelled to Brazil. The figure of Ignazio de Azevedo, Procurer of the Jesuit missions in Brazil, appears in the image three times: tumbling down from the ship after his head is cut open, tossed around by the force of the ocean waves, and propelled upwards on a cloud towards a bright light emanating from above. Once again these bodily changes are linked to the ability to see, a relationship which is indicated through the multiple appearances of the image of the Virgin carried by Azevedo on the journey. Indeed, this printed copy of the

² St. Teresa of Jesus, *Complete Works* 2 314–5 (Interior Castle, IX).

sacred icon of the Virgin undergoes its own transformations; it is barely visible when Azevedo crumples it in his hand during the attack; it gains prominence in a distorted form as it re-emerges from underwater held by Azevedo; and it is reconstituted into perfect form when it reappears in the heavenly sphere, although it is suffused by the white light to the point that it seems about to vanish.

The print, then, brings together three kinds of mutating bodies: the visionary, the martyr, and the sacred image. It also represents both a vision and a visionary state, with all three bodies caught in a state of intense experience while simultaneously moving beyond their physicality and self-awareness. As Mieke Bal notes in relation to Bernini's sculpture of St. Teresa in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome, the body is at once held in place and decentred by the force of the vision.³ These contradictory impulses also seem to be part of the experience of viewing the print. Certainly the print hurls the viewer into a dizzying state of disorientation. A set of intersecting but disjointed viewing points swirl bodies around, encountering inconsistencies of space and time, and preventing the visible from turning into the readable. Other prints [Fig. 2] tend to represent the incident in which Azevedo and his companions died as a close-up view of the ship under attack in the middle of a vast ocean, their deaths at the hands of Huguenots all the more horrific for being visualised both as a crush of bodies on the ship and as body parts disappearing into a bottomless ocean. Now, however, we encounter the scene of massacre at a distance. The historical event is in fact partly concealed and even displaced by the very parts of the image – the heavenly ascension, St. Teresa experiencing her vision – that purport to reveal its meaning. It is commonplace to use a vertical arrangement to organise the spatial relation between the earthly and the heavenly, but in this image the actual and the virtual maintain no such hierarchy. While one side of the heavenly sphere propels one upwards, the other mimics the gravitational pull of the earthly sphere as angels twist awkwardly around clouds, trying not to fall when they hand the martyr's palm and crown to those thrown from the ship; in fact the angels skim over dark clouds that may extend the heavenly sphere but also become the smoke emanating from the ship's canons. Time is no less ambiguous than space, as the moment of the attack, the moment of

³ Bal M., "Ecstatic Aesthetics: Metaphoring Bernini", in Farago E. – Zwijnenberg R. (eds.), *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art in and out of History* 15.



Fig. 2. Louis Richeome, The massacre of the 40 Jesuit martyrs, in *Le Peinture Spirituelle* (Paris: 1611).

St. Teresa having her vision of the attack, and the moment within the vision itself begin to converge. The platform on the foreground serves as a decisive frame to focus our view, and separate the time and place of martyrdom from the time and place of the vision. But the waves of the ocean lap onto the platform and take the shape of its distinctive tile pattern, while the saint holds a book that might be the prayer book that prompted the vision or might be her celebrated written account of the vision. The state of ecstasy, or even the attempt to recount it, keeps to no structure of time and space, and thus follows no narrative sequence or perspectival order.

It is the inscription at the bottom of the image that has the task of disentangling the distinctive moments that the image so disarmingly melds into a complex and unsettling whole. The first part of the text defines the historical incident, the attack on July 14th, 1570 by a Protestant ship from Navarre on the Portuguese ship bound for Brazil carrying the missionary Father Ignatius de Azevedo and his 39 companions. The second part states with equal certainty that the ultimate triumph of the Jesuits over death and their place in heaven was disclosed by St. Teresa of Avila. In both text and image, St. Teresa is found in the lower right corner, the last word to be read and the last thing to be seen, but the one upon which everything else depends.

Spierre's print, produced to coincide with a new trial held in Rome in 1665 to forward the case of martyrdom for the Jesuits, offers a remarkable concern with the body's making and unmaking.⁴ The case for martyrdom had from the start presented problems due to a lack of physical evidence, and after many failed attempts to argue for martyrdom, the cult was allowed to be resumed in 1669, although under severe restrictions.⁵ In the ongoing case to raise the status of the Jesuits, which thus far has only resulted in their beatification in 1853, the primary strategy had been to use St. Teresa's vision as proof of their privileged state.⁶ The print, however, does not simply assert the truth of this claim through the evidence of St. Teresa's vision, rather it seeks to do so by knitting the different bodies together and making their mutating states interdependent, and in turn tied to the act of viewing. What

⁴ On the unhooking of the body, see Deleuze G., *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson – R. Galeta (London: 1989) 1–24.

⁵ Cabral A., *Relazione della Vita, e Martirio del Venerabil Padre Ignazio de Azevedo* (Rome: 1743) 196.

⁶ Cabral A., *Relazione* 172f.

are the implications of re-routing viewership through these embodied states and how is this pertinent not only to visionary experience and the Jesuit case for martyrdom, but also to concepts of the visual image at a time when its status was under severe contestation?

St. Teresa deploys a traditional idea of visionary progress. She advances from the corporeal vision, which draws on the eyes of the body, to the imaginative vision, which is internal but still guided by known models, and finally to the intellectual vision, which perceives the object without a sensible image and exceeds the natural range of understanding.⁷ But St. Teresa not only continues to experience imaginative and even corporeal visions after advancing to intellectual visions, but she also maintains that to transgress bodily limitations one must use the visual imagination:

Let us now come to imaginary visions, in which the devil is said to interfere more frequently than in those already described. This may well be the case; but when they come from Our Lord they seem to me in some ways more profitable because they are in close conformity with our nature [...]. [...] Some people perhaps because they have a weak imagination think that they can actually see everything that is in their mind (or know all that they see). If they had ever seen a true vision they would realize that their error beyond the possibility of doubt. Little by little they build up the picture which they see with their imagination, but this produces no effect upon them and they remain cold – much more so than they are after seeing a sacred image.⁸

The ability to move to another realm by using the visual imagination is first and foremost a question of critically assessing what one sees and acknowledging that some things remain invisible. If the imagination fails, then one cannot produce the bodily intensity needed to move beyond the body.

The question of the visual imagination is central to St. Teresa's struggle to translate an interior experience into language. It is within the visual imagination that she is able to articulate some sense of her visions and even to explore her changing relationship to seeing. For instance it prompts her to compare visions to actual religious images:

At certain times it really seemed to me that it was an image I was seeing; but on many other occasions I thought it was no image, but Christ

⁷ On St. Teresa and early modern mysticism, see Mazzoni C., *Saint Hysteria. Neurosis, Mysticism, and Gender in European Culture* (Ithaca: 1996).

⁸ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 2 314, 316 (Interior Castle, IX).

Himself, such was the brightness with which He was pleased to reveal Himself to me. Sometimes, because of its indistinctness, I would think the vision was an image, thought it was like no earthly painting, however perfect, and I have seen a great many good ones. It is ridiculous to think that the one thing is any more like the other than a living person is like his portrait: however well the portrait is done, it can never look completely natural: one sees, in fact that it is a dead thing.⁹

As Victor Stoichita argues, a dialogue between the mystical and artistic imagination is not unusual, and the back and forth between vision and painting is frequently part of mystical accounts.¹⁰ St. Teresa charts out a close passage from painting to vision, one in which brightness and indistinctiveness are conjoined, and in which absence and presence are constantly under scrutiny. She does not reject painting, rather she uses it to build a bridge to the more unexpected and incomprehensible aspects of interior vision.

St. Teresa keeps to the Aristotelian idea that the imagination is the intermediary between perception and thought, and that memory must be activated by the imaginative faculty.¹¹ She thus maintains that it is the imagination that makes one look beyond the surface appearance of the visible even while it operates through the visible. But the visual imagination was highly suspect in St. Teresa's particular context, and its links to idolatry and demonic delusions¹² meant that her arduous process of self-examination was not without its dangers:

[...] they told me, as they often did, that I was being deceived by the devil and that it was all the work of my imagination. I also drew such comparisons as I could and as the Lord revealed to my understanding. But it was to little purpose, because there were some very holy persons in the place, by comparison with whom I was a lost creature, and as God was not leading these persons by that way, they were afraid and thought that what I saw was the result of my sins. They repeated to one another what I said, so that before long they all got to know about it, though I had spoken of it only to my confessor and to those with whom he had commanded me to discuss it.¹³

⁹ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 1 181 (Life, XXVIII).

¹⁰ Stoichita VI., *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: 1995) 45f., 48.

¹¹ Yates F., *The Art of Memory* (London: 1966) 46.

¹² Yates F., *The Art of Memory* (London: 1966) 270.

¹³ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 1 184 (Life XXVIII).

St. Teresa's accounts of visionary experience take the form of a confession, a response to her Jesuit confessor who, if we believe her, forced her to tell with great precision what was most difficult to tell. In effect, it is within confession that a particular form of translation takes place and it is in forging this translation that self-reflection emerges. As recent studies of confession have suggested, the Jesuits' innovative conceptualisation of confession was primarily to instil self-discipline in order to confront the contradictions brought by religious and political divisions.¹⁴ Michel Foucault recognised that confession is a ritual in which expression alone independent of external circumstances alters the person who articulates it;¹⁵ the confession is extracted from the depths of the self, in a self-examination that yields through a multitude of fleeting impressions a truth. While this production of truth is imbued in relations of power, its veracity is guaranteed by the intimacy between one who speaks and what she speaks about.

In the context of St. Teresa's visionary experiences, the practices of confession brought forth a particularly charged set of exchanges fought over the body and especially the bodily senses. The focus was on controlling the senses and especially the potential risks of vision to lead one astray.¹⁶ But St. Teresa puts more onus on the process of interpretation than on the interpretation itself, and thus her struggle is not only about turning unlimited sensory perception into appropriate language, but also about the tension that emerges between the desire to give herself to the power of god and her self-awareness. For St. Teresa, the loss of bodily control represents the disavowal of self-awareness, but the translation from interiority to exteriority requires considerable self-awareness.¹⁷ Every attempt to move out of her body is intertwined with awareness about the nature of her pursuit, not god as much as the absence of god. Ironically, her own loss of physical sensation is conjoined with an intensification of love and desire that activates her bodily senses. This is a disembodiment produced through the desire for the absent body of Christ. St. Teresa always brings into view the image of Christ at the

¹⁴ Boer, W. de, *The Conquest of the Soul. Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden: 2001) 12–44.

¹⁵ Foucault M., *The History of Sexuality* (New York: 1980) 58–65.

¹⁶ Boer W. de, *The Conquest of the Soul* 112–115.

¹⁷ On mysticism as a form of translation, see de Certeau M., *The Mystic Fable. The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Chicago: 1992) 79–205.

very moment of its becoming or unbecoming flesh; in other words, at the boundary between his embodied and divine state:

One day when I was in prayer, the Lord was pleased to reveal to me nothing but His hands, the beauty of which was so great as to be indescribable. [...] A few days later I also saw that Divine face, which seemed to leave me completely absorbed.¹⁸

I was extremely desirous of observing the colour of His eyes, or His height, so that I should be able to describe it, I have never been sufficiently worthy to see this [...]. Almost invariably the Lord showed Himself to me in His resurrection body, and it was thus too, that I saw Him in the Host. Only occasionally, to strengthen me when I was in tribulation did He show me His wounds, and then He would appear sometimes as He was on the Cross and sometimes as in the Garden.¹⁹

The disembodied experience produces in effect presence in the form of an embodied image. Given this impulse to bring embodiment to the absence of the sacred, it is all the more interesting that Spierre's print should frame the 1570 incident within St. Teresa's visionary practices.

A lack of bodily evidence had stalled Jesuit claims of martyrdom for years, and from the start this insurmountable obstacle had been linked to recent arguments on the visual image. In Richard Verstegan's *The Theatre of Heretical Cruelties in Our Time* (1587),²⁰ which presents a sequence of recent Protestant atrocities perpetrated on defenders of the Catholic faith, the incident is overtly linked to Protestant destruction of church images in the Netherlands in 1566.²¹ Both are said to suffer a double death; with their limbs hacked off and thrown into the sea, the Jesuits [Fig. 3] are drowned and eradicated, while Christ [Fig. 4] is crucified as a body and smashed as an image. In both instances, the aim is to destroy not only the sacrificial body but also the ability to access it here on earth.

Even so, by the time Antonio Cabral published his influential account of Azevedo and his companions in 1743, the argument for martyrdom was entirely dependent on an interpretation of the incident that had emerged within visionary experience. Cabral outlines the trial evidence collected up to 1743, and reveals that it was almost exclusively

¹⁸ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 1 178 (Life, XXVIII).

¹⁹ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 1 187f. (Life, XXIX).

²⁰ Verstegan R., *Theatrum Crudelitatum Haereticorum Nostri Temporis* (Antwerp: 1587).

²¹ Koerner J., "The Icon as Iconoclasm" in Latour B. – Weibel (eds.), *Iconoclasm Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art* (Karlsruhe: 2002) 164.

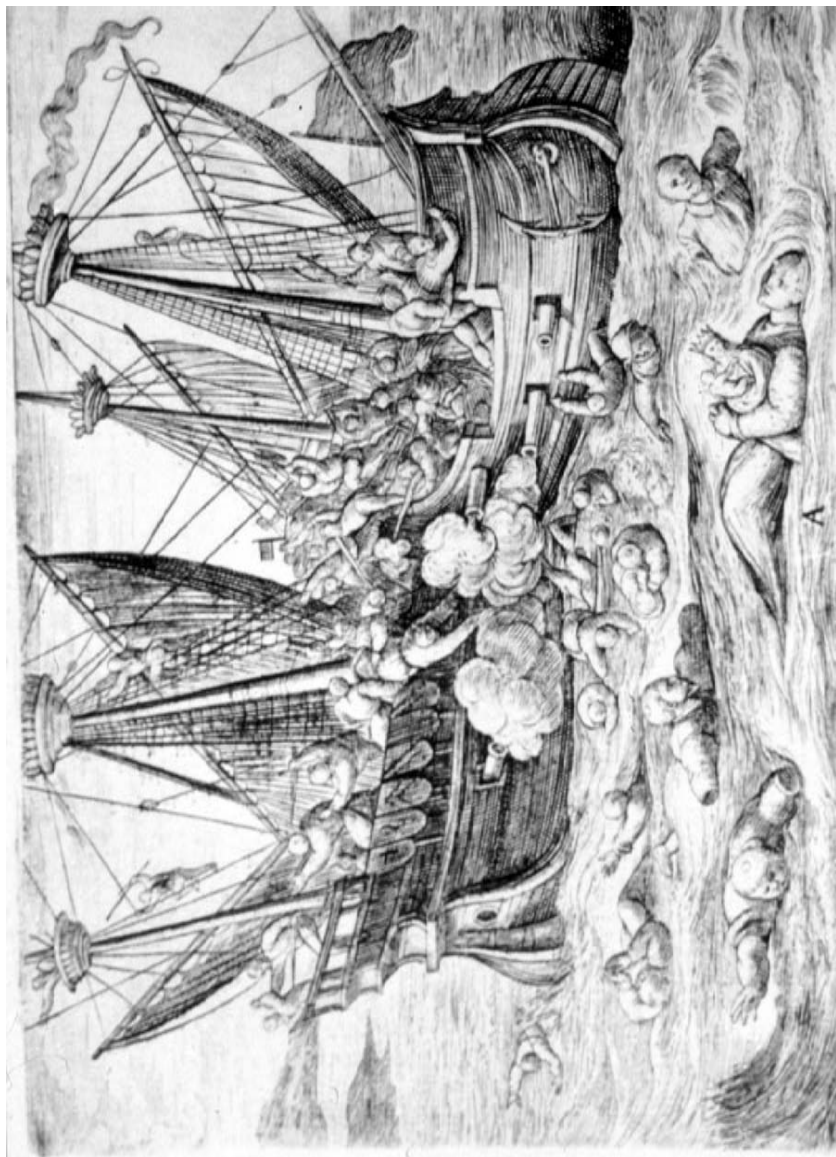


Fig. 3. Richard Verstegan, The massacre of the 40 Jesuit martyrs, in *Theatrum Crudelitatum* (Antwerp: 1587).

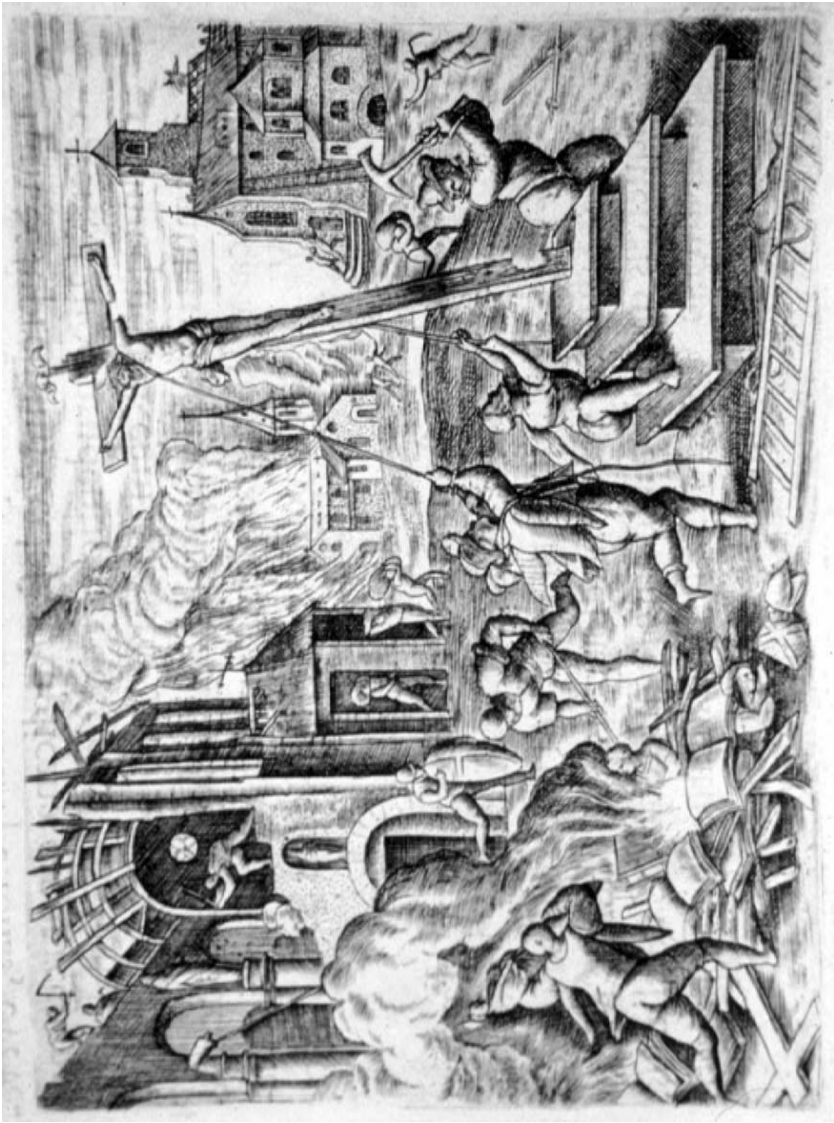


Fig. 4. Richard Verstegan, The destruction of church images, in *Theatrum Crudelitatum* (Antwerp: 1587).

dependent on visions. Indeed, many of the visionary tropes are interwoven into the historical description of the attack:

[...] one of them gave him a great strike of the sword on the head, made him fall to the ground, and took out a part of the cranium in such a way that one could see the brain. Four other came upon him with lances, and opened his chest in four parts from which spouted four rivers of blood. He still gathered whatever spirit remain in him, raised again his voice and said thus: The angels and the men are my witnesses that I die for the Roman Catholic Church, and die voluntarily in the defense of its dogma and rituals [...]. They were struck dumb these men in seeing such constancy, but then with natural ferocity attempted with disregard to cut out of his hands the holy effigy of the Virgin [...]. In vain they attempted to cut it [?] from the hands while he was already dead; that he held it strongly is an evident miracle, never letting go even when already dead and thrown into the sea. And it was observed with wonder by all how that corpse, himself in the form of a cross with arms extended, was held the whole day on the waves, and always holding with the right hand high that painting still wanting it to be exposed to public veneration [...].²²

The opening of the body of the martyr confirms his sanctity, which is shown to reside in his innermost body and within the flow of blood that forges the four rivers of Paradise. This sign of interiority is then transferred to the sacred image, which is first witness to the spilling of blood but then subsumes the act of suffering by taking it upon itself; the violence imposed by the Protestants on the martyr's body is completed by the violence on the image. It is while suspended underwater that the two bodies become conjoined, and the embodied nature of one is transferred to the other. Azevedo doubles as the crucified Christ, while the now embodied sacred image of the Virgin carries the presence of the martyr.

For the Jesuits martyrdom became not only a desirable goal but also a way to write institutional history, one in which past and future folded into each other as each martyrdom verified those in the past and foretold those in the future.²³ But the pursuit of martyrdom was

²² Cabral A., *Relazione della Vita, e Martirio del Venerabil Padre Ignazio de Azevedo* 142–144, 166–169.

²³ Ahern M., "Visual and Verbal Sites: The Construction of Jesuit Martyrdom in Northwest New Spain in Andrés Pérez de Ribas" *Historia de los Triunfos de nuestra santa Fee* (1645), *Colonial Latin America* Review 8,1 (1999) 12–17.

inextricably connected with the pursuit of self-reflection.²⁴ Thus Jesuit accounts of a worldwide network of missions take the form of martyrologies and serve as a repertoire of models for self-examination in relation to an externalised and extended world. Azevedo's model features prominent in these global schemes, although its situation within Jesuit history remains unsettled. It is found at the centre of Louis Richeome's meditational manual *Le Peinture Spirituelle* (1611), where it becomes the main example of visionary self-reflection, assisted in this aim by an image of the instruments of martyrdom organised in a decorative pattern. Azevedo's example concludes Michelangelo Lualdi's *Oriental India subjected to the Gospel* (1653), where it serves as the unfulfilled promise that will prompt future Jesuit sacrifice. In Mathias Tanner's influential martyrology *Societas Iesu* (1675), the incident is granted two images; one represents the historical narrative in the form of the massacre on the ship, the other [Fig. 5] presents the figure of Azevedo pierced by a sword as he clutches the image of the Virgin to his chest.²⁵ In effect this is a visionary image in which the process of martyrdom and the embodied sacred image have become conjoined. It is not a visionary image that emerges out of the historical incident, but rather the other way around.

It is useful to consider St. Teresa's discussion of a reliquary and how the denial of the desire for what is hidden within it actually produces its effects:

It is as if in a gold reliquary there were hidden a precious stone of the highest value and the choicest virtues: although we have never seen the stone, we know for certain that it is there and if we carry it about with us we can have the benefit of its virtues. We do not prize it any the less for not having seen it, because we have found by experience that it has cured us of certain illnesses for which it is a sovereign remedy. But we dare not look at it, or open the reliquary in which it is contained, nor are we able to do so; for only the owner of the jewel knows how to open it, and though he has lent it to us so that we may benefit by it, he has kept the key and so it is still his own. He will open it when he wants to show it to us and he will take it back when he sees fit to do so. And that is what God does too.²⁶

²⁴ On the Jesuit notion of martyrdom, see Ahern, M., "Visual and Verbal Sites" 7–33.

²⁵ Tanner M., *Societas Iesu* (Prague: 1675) 166–174.

²⁶ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 2 314f.



Fig. 5. Mathias Tanner, Ignatius Azevedo, in *Societas Iesu* (Prague: 1675).

The unfulfilled longing to see the thing itself only produces a more intimate relationship to it, but proximity to it is a process of constant negotiation that leads to self-awareness and the recognition of bodily limits. Likewise, the lack of the bodily remains of Azevedo and his companions had not stopped miraculous effects, which resulted in Urban VIII prohibiting all forms of public veneration in 1625.²⁷ But the focus of this veneration was not bodily remains but an image. When permission for the cult was finally granted in 1742 in a decree of Pope Benedict XIV, the image is shown to have already functioned as substitute for the relics:

[...] since no relics could be obtained because they were thrown in the sea, it was convenient to multiply the images to satisfy the piety of those who kept it, especially since these counted already with a large number of favours obtained through their intercession.²⁸

The image in question is the icon of the Virgin carried by Azevedo. Trial accounts state that upon his return to Europe in 1569, Azevedo visited Rome and expressed his desire to carry with him the image of the Virgin that was held to be a genuine portrait by the hand of St. Luke held in the church of Sta. Maria Maggiore.²⁹ The privileged status of this icon as the true image of the Virgin painted by the hand of St. Luke had long been established, but its miraculous healing powers apparently date from the 13th century. It was at this time that Voragine's *Golden Legend* promoted the 590 incident in which the image carried in a penitential procession undertaken by Pope Gregory the Great through Rome to placate the onslaught of the plague, and which led to the miraculous appearance of the Archangel Michael in front of Hadrian's Mausoleum.³⁰

²⁷ Father de Beauvais, *The Lives of St. Peter of Alcantara and of the Ven. Father Ignatius Azevedo of the Society of Jesus* (London: 1856) 240f.

²⁸ Cabral A., *Relazione della Vita* 3 of the unpaginated introduction.

²⁹ On this icon, see Wolf G., *Salus Populi Romani. Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: 1990); Belting H., *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago: 1994) 44–77; Belting also notes that in Gumpenberg's atlas, the icon of the Virgin in SM Maggiore has second place after miraculous image of Loreto; 485; Barone G., "Immagini miracolose a Roma alla fine del Medio Evo", in Thunø E. – Wolf G. (eds.), *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Rome: 2004) 123–133; Noreen K., "The icon of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome: an image and its afterlife", *Renaissance Studies* 19 (2005) 660–672.

³⁰ Belting H., *Likeness and Presence* 64–69; Noreen K., "The icon of Santa Maria Maggiore" 660–661; Barone G., "Immagini miracolose" 126; 130.

The much publicised campaign by the Jesuits to acquire a copy of this image was in itself part of the making of the image as an authentic carrier of the presence of the Virgin. Azevedo's own wish to carry a copy of this image to Brazil is always analogous to the desire of Jesuit Director Francisco Baroja's attempts to acquire a copy for Carlo Borromeo, who was archpriest of the basilica and who took it to Milan when he became Archbishop in 1572. All accounts accentuate the difficulty of acquiring the permit, and then report that the pope agreed to multiple copies; Azevedo took at least two, one painted and one printed version, the latter which was with him when he died.³¹

The claims about this image's embodied authenticity are closely linked to the campaign to reconstitute the lost body of the martyr. In part this link was secured by drawing on the controversial tradition of sacred images. It is not coincidental that destruction through blood and water are evoked so consistently for it is one of the ways in which the image of the Virgin painted by St. Luke was verified. Michele Giustiniani's account of the sacred image of the Madonna of Constantinople, published in Rome in 1656, expounds on the various images of the Virgin that are claimed to be painted by St. Luke. The historical provenance is debated, with many sources and opinions articulated and assessed, but he ultimately turns to the remarkable survival of the Madonna of Constantinople, which was established in Constantinople by the Emperor Constantine, but in 717 it was thrown into the sea by iconoclasts.³² After a tempest that lasted for 54 days, the image washed up on shore at Istria, and its very determination to return once it had virtually dissolved in the water is taken as proof of authentic presence within the image.³³

The sacred image carried by Azevedo was to stand as a kind of substitute for his bodily remains, and the proof was its own survival plus its success in carrying signs of the martyr's body. According to Gilles-Francois De Beauvais, in his 1744 French edition of the life of Azevedo, the image eventually found its way to Brazil, and it was particularly prodigious because "some traces are seen on it of the blood which flowed from the wounds of the blessed martyr".³⁴ In the accounts

³¹ Noreen K., "The icon of Santa Maria Maggiore" 664.

³² Giustiniani M., *Dell' origine della Madonna di Costantinopoli, o sia d'Istria* (Rome: 1656) 2-4.

³³ Giustiniani M., *Dell' origine* 25.

³⁴ *La vie du venerable pere Ignace Azevedo* (Paris: 1744) 369.

produced to promote the copy of the image deposited in the Noviciate of Coimbra in Portugal, the blood in the image, and the blood in the water are conjoined:

The glorious Father was enveloped in his own blood, his head open to the outside, his chest with wounds emitting blood. Those who beheld him in the water saw only the wounds in his face and head. The image of Our Lady entirely bloodied floated in blood.³⁵

Here we are close to the visionary experience.

So how did Teresa herself describe her vision of the death of the Jesuits on the ship? Not very precisely as it turns out. Within St. Teresa's visions, the martyrdom of Ignacio Azevedo and his 39 companions is unusual to the point that one might think it was directly prompted by the presence of her Jesuit confessor:

Concerning the members of the Order to which this Father belongs – namely the Company of Jesus – and of the entire Order itself I have seen great things. On several occasions I saw these Fathers in Heaven with white banners in their hands, and as I say I have seen other things concerning them which give cause for great wonder. Thus I hold this Order in great veneration.³⁶

Even taking St. Teresa's concern with the impossibility of matching words to visions, the gap between the event and the vision seems large. While the saint conceives visionary experience in terms of repetitive moments, each enacting on the other, the trial evidence presented it as a moment of historical simultaneity:

At the moment that the death of these servants of God occurred on the Atlantic, the Virgin St. Teresa was in her convent in Avila immersed in her prayer book when suddenly she saw outside of herself the heavens open, and in the middle an immense light through which entered in triumphant manner our 40 martyrs all with palm in hand and crown on the head. This revelation was written in her book for her confessor as was its authenticity of a prophetic vision, by which a distant event is as clearly known as if it were seen with the eyes of the body.³⁷

³⁵ Franco A., *Vida e Martyrio do Beato Ignacio de Azevedo e seus bemaventurados Campanheiros da Campanhia de Jesus* (Lisbon: 1890) 99.

³⁶ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 1 272 (Life, XXXVIII).

³⁷ Cabral A., *Relazione della Vita* 172–173; this account of St. Teresa's vision is repeated by Father de Beauvais, *The Lives* 370f.

The specificity of the historical is linked to the physical sense of sight, which is of course at odds with Teresa's own assertions about the nature of her visions. For St. Teresa, the problem with the sense of sight, which she equates with painting, is that it cannot access inner animation, reminding one constantly of what is not there. Yet for this very reason, she turns to painting to pursue her desire for the presence that is denied to her. Both entail an imaginary projection, even if she distinguishes between internal vision and external sight as well as between an internal experience that is uncontrollable and a form of imaging that imposes control from without. It recalls Ignatius of Loyola's argument that the problem of external images is that they tend to override the images produced by one's interior imagination. In effect, the image is not to be put into memory as it stands, but is to press one to produce other images with the aim of reaching beyond what the image makes visible.³⁸ Thus St. Teresa maintains that it is the imagination that makes one look beyond the surface appearance of the visible even while it operates through the visible. In the context in which Teresa of Jesus confesses, it is not only about turning the sensory into language, but also about finding the invisible in the visible.

It is significant that the visions used for trial evidence did not assert the synchronicity of time that was claimed in the case of St. Teresa's own vision. Rather these follow St. Teresa's more typical approach and draw on painting in order to forward the visionary experience. In spite of the risks of the visual imagination, the initial Jesuit accounts of the 1570 massacre draw on the metaphor of painting to transform a scanty historical narrative into a site for self-reflection.³⁹ In particular, Louis Richeome's *Le Peinture Spirituelle* demonstrates how the historical incident was transformed through the pictorial imagination, and in doing so not only extended the possibilities of the account but also the possibilities for the role of pictorial constructs for practices of self-reflection. When one encounters the first account of the massacre of Azevedo and his 39 companions, it is in the form of a painting, or rather a print since the text is closely tied to the accompanying image [Fig. 2]. It is this rhetorical evocation that demonstrates painting to be the point at which the historical event and its deeper truth might overlap, and which must

³⁸ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 1 386.

³⁹ Lualdi M., *L'India Orientale soggettata al Vangelo* (Rome: 1653) 392–400.

be animated with an emotionally charged imagination if it is to move beyond the literal evidence:

Look at the pitifully ravaging of these slaughtered lambs in every part of the ship, or those thrown into the sea which becomes inflamed with anger. Behold their gaping spilling wounds and marvel to see how the turbulent waves convert into blood.⁴⁰ But who is this good father with a head cut open who holds the image of the Virgin in his arms that the insolent soldier tries to take from him but cannot? And the young man who carries the cross through the weapons of the enemies of the cross?⁴¹

It is the shifts within a visual form – men/lambs, sea/anger, waves/blood – and the invisible within the visible that presses physical suffering towards martyrdom and the imagination to the threshold of death. While the ultimate aim may be to reach the hidden truth, it is the struggle to get there that offers the most decisive moments of self-examination, the struggle to deny sensory perception while using it to do so.

The visions recorded by the Jesuits for the Azevedo canonisation trial draw on just those aspects of the image that move from historical details to points of extension facilitated by the dissolution of the image itself; the Jesuit priest Mario Falconio testified to his experience while on his way to Paraguay:

Most marvellous was what happened to Father Falconio six years later while on his way to Paraguay. Arriving at the spot where the forty martyrs left their lives, the wind suddenly died and the sea became extremely calm; while they waited for the wind to return, suddenly within everyone's sight the clouds and the sea became tinted in vermillion as if bleeding [...] and once the water had changed back to its native colour, there appeared on its surface, which was glittering like a crystal, an invisible panel on which was duplicated over and over again the suffering of the forty martyrs.⁴²

It is striking how the vision takes up just those parts of the visual image where the contours are most porous; the clouds, the sea, the bleeding body. These are the points at which the image is literally in the process of changing, of becoming something else, and where projection into the image can become especially creative. Victor Stoichita argues that within Spanish mysticism, the cloud was favoured as a kind of

⁴⁰ Richeome L., *Le Peinture Spirituelle* (Paris: 1611) 192.

⁴¹ Richeome L., *Le Peinture Spirituelle* 193.

⁴² Cabral A., *Relazione della Vita* 180f.

negative space; it is the visible part of the sky but it is also a kind of empty space in the process of changing and taking on new form.⁴³ The dynamic nature of the cloud, its constant metamorphoses amplifies the uncertainty of meaning.⁴⁴ Some mystics, John of the Cross, for example, saw clouds as a useless barrier between the mystical and the divine. For Teresa of Avila, however, the cloud reveals more than it conceals; the cloud takes on the role of agent for the visualisation of the sacred and is the sign of a presence, although the challenge is not to imbue it with more tangible forms or figures from elsewhere within the self. Clouds, traditionally a site of revelation and concealment, could also block the far-reaching subtle and simple light of the spirit just as the surface of things prevent one from seeing what lies beyond the surface.⁴⁵ So presence is not in the object that is the image, as the sacred icon might imply, but in the viewer's production of mutating images.

In St. Teresa's visions, as in the print, the sacred image behaves in a manner that is consistent with the different stages of moving towards the sacred and reaching its limits. The ability of the image to blind all those who look directly into this sacred realm is directly linked by St. Teresa with the ultimate stages of visions, with being in the presence of god. She tells that in a vision god is alive, talking, animated, but also that he cannot be looked at due to nature of the light, for the inner glow would blind if one looked for any length of time, and one cannot even imagine or understand it.⁴⁶

But before blindness, before it is no longer possible to comprehend, the process of moving, however minutely, from one image impression to the next, offers the most powerful phase of self-examination. The imagination may stop short of the intellectual vision, but it is what enables the recognition of resemblance and difference to be activated, and thus to see semblance in dissimulation and dissimulation in semblance.

To return to Spierre's print, the revelation of truth is in the heavenly sphere, where the sacred image finally becomes readable but where whatever there is to see is out of our reach, literally suffused with light and beyond the frame. But the crucial process of assessment and change takes place in the foreground, where the suspended body of Azevedo holds the sacred image, an image distorted through the water

⁴³ Stoichita V.I., *Visionary Experience* 84f.

⁴⁴ Stoichita V.I., *Visionary Experience* 85.

⁴⁵ Stoichita V.I., *Visionary Experience* 85f.

⁴⁶ St. Teresa, *Complete Works* 1 383.

and in the process of changing before our very eyes. Here the image is not easily readable but it is full of potential. It is at the centre of the vertiginous movement of the print and of the vision, which are both all about space and time but not at all about defining the space and time for the process of self-reflection. It is the visual imagination that prompts this movement, and being always on the move proves unstable and even dangerous. The imagination resists the ordering of memory, wrenches memory out of any stable location, interlinks it with another recollection and sets it in motion anew.

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SPIRIT AS INTERMEDIARY IN POST-CARTESIAN NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

Justin E.H. Smith

1. *Introduction*

In the second of his *Meditations* Descartes is at pains to explain that, when he speaks of animal spirits, he means something entirely physical and so entirely distinct from what he, as a thinking thing, is. For him, a subtle vapour, however subtle, is, *qua* vapour, just a body like any other body. Thus:

I am not a thin and penetrating air diffused through all these members, or wind, or flame, or vapour, or breath, or any of all the things I can imagine; for I supposed that all these were not, and, without changing the supposition, I find that I still feel assured of my existence.¹

And in *The Passions of the Soul* Descartes again affirms: ‘Ce que je nomme ici des esprits ne sont que des corps.’²

Descartes is here attempting to radically redefine a very common and well established notion in the history of physiology, theology, and alchemy, among other disciplines. In the mid-sixteenth century, for example, we find Jean Fernel offering the following, traditional definition of ‘spirit’:

The proper sense of the word ‘spirit’ is, in all languages, breath, wind. As wind brings about very powerful effects and yet is not visible, the name ‘spirit’ is given to any corporeal or incorporeal thing that does not enter into the senses [...]. To the extent that it brings about its effects, spirit seems to have some affinity with bodies; to the extent that it does not produce these, it is an incorporeal substance. It is thus mixed and intermediate between the corporeal and the incorporeal. All immaterial substances that escape the senses exercise their influence on material bodies by means of spirit.³

¹ In *Oeuvres de Descartes*, eds. Adam C. – Tannery P., vol. 7 (Paris: 1983) 27.

² *Oeuvres de Descartes*, eds. Adam C. – Tannery P., vol. 11, 335.

³ Fernel J., *On the Hidden Causes of Things: Forms, Souls, and Occult Diseases in Renaissance Medicine*. With an edition and translation of Fernel’s *De abditis rerum causis*, ed. J.M. Forrester (Leiden: 2005) II 7.

It would be all too easy to presume that Fernel's definition amounts to the expression of a moribund world-view, soon to be replaced by one that allows into the domain of natural phenomena only entities that are unambiguously physical; with Descartes and Hobbes, it is often presumed, whether one inclines with the first towards dualism or with the second towards materialism, one thing can be agreed upon, and that is that nature consists in lifeless bodies alone, and their mass, figure, and motion.

Descartes' insight had been that, however subtle, a body is a body, and if we want to speak of the mental in terms of a subtle body we are only using an analogy from the physical world for something that remains mysterious to us. He would no doubt have seen the representation of Casper the Ghost as a transparent body that partially occludes what is behind it as a sort of pleasing aid to the imagination – one that signals to the cartoon's viewer that Casper is there, but that is, strictly speaking, *de trop*. From Descartes' point of view, a soul could no more really be subtle than a mind could really be sharp or love could really be sweet. In claiming that spirit is just a body, while his soul is not at all a spirit, Descartes is aiming to purge his philosophy of the sort of analogy that poetry and the imagination love but that have no place in a philosophy built up from clear and distinct ideas.

But Descartes' corporealisation of spirit evidently was not an altogether successful one; for throughout the rest of the seventeenth century, a vast number of natural philosophers – and most of whom considered themselves every bit as modern as Descartes himself had, continued to invoke spirit as an entity occupying a sort of middle zone between the mental and the physical, as something that is capable of condensation and rarefaction, that admits of degrees of incorporeality depending on how rarefied it is.

The non-paradigmatic status of 'pure' mechanism in the late seventeenth century has been noted and well described by a number of historians of science, as well as the rare historian of philosophy. Catherine Wilson distinguishes between the reductive atomism we associate with the period, and the qualitative corpuscularianism that was in fact much more widespread.⁴ As Wilson notes, historians of early modern science

⁴ See Wilson C., "Corpuscular Effluvia: Between Imagination and Experiment", in Zittel C. – Detel W. (eds.), *Ideals and Cultures of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe/Wissensideale und Wissenskulturen in der frühen Neuzeit. Concepts, Methods, Historical Conditions and Social Impact*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: 2002) 161–184.

who reject the cruder view prevalent among historians of philosophy, according to which early seventeenth-century mechanism initiated a swift 'paradigm shift', have also been moving away from the view that early modern thinkers first embraced a thoroughgoing mechanist world-view only to make some concessions and allowances later in the century whereby a certain amount of Renaissance-style, qualitative description of nature and ontological commitment beyond bodies with their mass, figure, and motion were allowed to creep back in. In place of this account, a new picture has emerged on which a strict or pure mechanism never came to predominate in the first place, so that when figures such as Newton incorporated forces and entities in the latter half of the seventeenth century that would have been offensive to Hobbes and Descartes, this was not due to any back-tracking or revisionism, but only because the landscape of scientific ontology had not really been painted monochrome by Newton's predecessors at all. As John Henry describes the century (at first facetiously, and then in earnest):

As every historian of science 'knows', the essentially unworkable mechanical philosophy was transformed by the genius of Newton who re-introduced 'occult qualities' into natural philosophy [...]. The historiographical emphasis on the radical revisionism or innovatory nature of Newton's account of occult active principles and the concentration on non-mechanist sources of influence like alchemy tends to perpetuate the view that English mechanical philosophy before Newton followed the essentially unworkable Cartesian programme in which matter was completely inert and could only act by virtue of its 'force of motion' in collision with other parts of matter.⁵

By charting the trajectory of the conception and uses of spirit through the second half of the seventeenth century, we may draw a valuable, revisionist moral about the developments in natural philosophy of the first half. It has been a mistake of historians of early modern science and philosophy to presume that the austerity programmes that Hobbes and Descartes initiated toward the middle of the seventeenth century took root and became paradigmatic. Those who believed that natural philosophy must confine itself to the study of intrinsically inert matter were, in fact, decidedly in the minority. And this is emphatically not because the 'pure' mechanisms of Hobbes and Descartes had by this point collapsed as a result of their own explanatory inadequacies.

⁵ Henry J., "Occult Qualities and the Experimental Philosophy: Active Principles in Pre-Newtonian Matter Theory", *History of Science* 24 (1986) 335–381, 336f.

Rather, they had never come to be perceived as the standard in the first place around 1680, the rejection of gradual rather than fundamental differences between the mental and the material, was by no means the shibboleth of membership in the community of rational scientific thinkers.

Much has been written already on the topic of spirit in early modern physiology and natural philosophy.⁶ What we will contribute here is a succinct account of the sundry sources of the concept Descartes would have liked to eradicate, and of the specific reasons modern natural philosophers in Descartes' wake had for continuing to draw on these sources. With respect to this latter aim, we will argue that the role in late seventeenth century natural philosophy was that of an *ineliminable intermediary*, that is, of an entity that must be posited in order to account for the relation between two ontological realms that have been separated from one another as radically ontologically dissimilar.

2. *The Sources of Spirit*

In this section, we shall summarise the various sources of the late seventeenth-century conception of spirit. One of the important lessons we may hope to learn from such a sketch is that the endurance of spirit as an intermediary between mind and body was not an aberration in this period. The conception of spirit that prevailed into the latter half of the seventeenth century – in spite of Descartes' effort to eradicate it – may be traced to its role in at least three distinct disciplines that extend back far before the modern period: theology, chemistry or alchemy, and physiology.

⁶ Among the more notable recent works, we mention Sutton J., *Philosophy and Memory Traces: Descartes to Connectionism* (Cambridge: 1998); Clower W.T., "The Transition from Animal Spirits to Animal Electricity: A Neuroscience Paradigm Shift", *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences* 7 (1998) 201–218; Rist J.M., "On Greek Biology, Greek Cosmology, and some sources of Theological *Pneuma*", in Dockrill D. – Tanner G. (eds.), *The Concept of Spirit* (Auckland: 1984); Schaffer S., "Godly Men and Mechanical Philosophers: Souls and Spirits in Restoration Natural Philosophy", *Science in Context* 1 (1987) 55–85.

A. *Spiritual and Elemental Bodies in the Christian Tradition*

In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton seeks to correct the now common theological view that angels are not subject to all the same bodily processes as any other creature. The angel Raphael has gone to visit Adam and Eve and warn them about their imminent temptation by Satan. Conscientious hosts, they are worried about their guest's dietary needs, and even whether he has any at all. Raphael assures them that 'food alike those pure/Intelligential substances require', since there is present

Within them every lower facultie
Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,
Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,
And corporeal to incorporeal turn.
For know, whatever was created, needs
To be sustained and fed [...] (V 410–414).

Thus assured, they sat down to eat:

And to thir viands fell, nor seemingly
The Angel, nor in mist, the common gloss
Of Theologians, but with keen dispatch
Of real hunger [...] (V 434–437).

Milton's view can be located at the extreme end of a spectrum in the history of angelology, with perhaps Thomas Aquinas occupying the opposite end in his conviction that angels are completely incorporeal and individuated only by the fact that each occupies its own species. Most have held to what Milton calls 'the common gloss/of Theologians', believing that, while angels could not be entirely immaterial, since only God is entirely free of body, still they are too close to the divine to be made up out of the sort of matter with which we are familiar.

The idea of spiritual bodies is one that Richard Burthogge, in his 1694 *Essay Upon Reason and the Nature of Spirit* invokes to argue, among other things, for the reality of ghosts, and in so doing he explicitly bases this on traditional Christian angelology. 'Spirits', he writes

are Incorporeal Beings in this sense, that they have not such Gross Elementary Bodies as we have, of Flesh and Blood and Bones, doe's not infer, that they are so in every sense of that word; especially if we Consider, that (as the Apostle assures us) there may be Spiritual Bodies.⁷

⁷ Burthogge R., *Essay Upon Reason and the Nature of Spirit* (London: 1694) 169.

Burthogge is referring to Paul's invocation of the *soma pneumatikon* of resurrected believers at 1 Corinthians 15:44, an idea that sets Paul sharply apart from the authors of the gospels, who emphasised the entirely physical, flesh-and-blood resurrection of Christians. While in earlier, Platonic philosophy Paul's phrase may have sounded like something of an oxymoron, the Platonising strain of early Christian theology would take its lead from him, incorporating an idea of the pneumatic as that which lies between the noetic and the somatic, i.e., of the spiritual as lying between the mental and the corporeal. The third-century Church Father Origen, for example, holds that all souls began as pure minds, but that as a result of distraction became 'cold' and fell away from the divine 'warmth'.⁸ In this way, turning away from God results in embodiment, initially in an ethereal body, and ultimately, as distance from God increases, souls descend 'from a fine, ethereal and invisible body to a body of a coarser and more solid state.' As he explains in *On First Principles*:

Material substance of this world, possessing a nature admitting of all possible transformations, is, when dragged down to beings of a lower order, moulded into the crasser and more solid condition of a body, so as to distinguish those visible and varying forms of the world; but when it becomes the servant of more perfect and more blessed beings, it shines in the splendour of celestial bodies, and adorns either the angels of God or the sons of the resurrection with the clothing of a spiritual body, out of all which will be filled up the diverse and varying state of the one world.⁹

Augustine, similarly, maintains that in the afterlife Christians will be outfitted with spiritual bodies, and also that prior to the fall Adam and Eve had only spiritual and not natural bodies, thus keeping them free of lust. The spiritual bodies of angels are a common theme in Ficino and other Renaissance Platonist writers; Leibniz later takes up their lead, sharing with them the view that having a body of some sort constitutes a *sine qua non* of individual existence and distinctness from God. Hobbes, for his part, believing that bodiliness constitutes a *sine qua non* for existence *simpliciter*, reasons that God himself must have a body composed of very fine, ethereal matter.

⁸ See *De principiis* 2.8.3, in *An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, and Selected Works*, tr. and ed. R.A. Greer (London: 1979).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.2.2.

The idea of spiritual bodies lives on today for countless aura readers and other New Age charlatans. At its prime, though, it occupied an important place in well-structured metaphysical theories, motivated either by the view that pure incorporeality would be tantamount to non-existence (Hobbes's view), or that pure incorporeality would be tantamount to identity with God (Leibniz's view), and yet that certain entities, in view of their relative divinity or blessedness, could not simply be corporeal in the way familiar to us terrestrial corruptible creatures. Arguably, Aristotle's conception of the celestial spheres as composed of a quintessence, rather than of a mixture of earth, air, fire and water, and thus as incorruptible – corruption consisting in nothing more than a coming-apart of mixed elements – is motivated by a similar concern to keep within his system entities that are God-like to the extent that they are immortal, yet man-like to the extent that they are, in some way, corporeal.

As with Aristotle's vagueness with respect to the actual properties of the fifth element, when it comes to describing spiritual bodies, Paul, Origen, Augustine and the others do not have much to say, other than to fall back on the evident metaphor – though we may ask if they themselves recognised it as such – of water vapour. As we will see, though, the conception of vapours, as the most refined distillation of elements and thus as their purest expression or 'spirit', was an important part of the medieval, Renaissance, and early modern investigation of the natural world.

B. Rarefaction and Condensation in the Alchemical Tradition

Bartolomeo Castelli, in his *Lexicon medicum graeco-latinum* of 1644 defines 'Spiritus' as the lightest distillation fraction of a substance.¹⁰ One of the important tasks of alchemy was to learn how to extract this from all manner of substances. Thus in his *Chymische Medicin* of 1638/39, the Leipzig alchemist Johann Agricola gives practical advice for distilling the spirit out of flesh, blood, sugar, and bread, among many other things.¹¹ Thus the *spiritus panis*, the vapour that remains in the glass bubble when the alchemist has performed his operations, is 'pure bread',

¹⁰ Castelli B., *Lexicon medicum graeco-latinum, ex Hippocrate, et Galeno desumptum* (Rotterdam: 1644).

¹¹ Agricola J., *Chymische Medicin: Ein Kompendium der Bereitung und Anwendung alchemischer Heilmittel* (Elberfeld: 2000).

bread unmixed or unvitiated by other substances that inevitably get mixed up in the crude loaf familiar from the dinner table. In this sense, spirit, for the alchemists, is the purest form of a thing; and significantly, this is always obtained by a process of rarefaction: the purest form of a thing is its rarest form, a gas and not a solid. The denser forms of things are the product of admixture and cooling. The investigator's task is to understand how these transitions occur in nature, and how to make them occur by human intervention. Thus Nicolas Lefèvre, in the *Traité de chimie* of 1660, describes chemistry as the study of how bodies become spiritualised and spirits corporealised.

It is not hard to discern what is shared between Origen's theological and eschatological conception of spiritual bodies on the one hand, and the conception of spirit in alchemy on the other. In both cases, the purest, untainted state of an entity, whether man or bread, is its rarest. Alchemy simply extends this principle to everything in nature, rather than restricting it to a consideration of the essence or spirit of man. Many early modern alchemists were perfectly aware of the connection between their search for the spirits of things and the theological conception of spirit. Marin Cureau de la Chambre, a founding member of the Académie des sciences and a practicing alchemist, describes spirits in his *Caractères des passions* of 1640 as 'immaterial bodies' that serve as intermediaries between God and nature and between body and soul. We will return to the role of intermediaries in natural philosophy shortly; what is interesting here is to note that early modern alchemy recognised the connection between the problem of intersubstantial causation and that of God's relationship to the world, and saw spirit as a way of dealing with this problem. God and immaterial soul do not have to deal with inert body directly – they are too dignified, and in any case, could not deal with these directly, since they lack the bodies to do so. Spirit is adduced to bridge the gap between fundamentally ontologically distinct realms. With respect to cosmology, what this means is that God never had to create bodies or set them in motion; rather, bodies are a degradation, as we have already seen in Origen's account of the origin of the world, of what was initially much closer to God.

The conception of the material world as consisting in spirit condensed to varying degrees was extended by many late-seventeenth-century natural philosophers from particular substances to the cosmos itself. For Newton, the world may be seen as the product of 'vapourous exhalations'. As he writes to Boyle in a letter of January 25, 1675/6:

The frame of nature [...] may be nothing but various contextures of some certain aethereal spirits or vapours, condensed, as it were, by praecipitation, much after the manner, that vapours are condensed into water, or exhalations into grosser substances, though not so easily condensable; and after condensation wrought into various forms, at first by the immediate hand of the Creator, and ever since by the power of nature, who, by virtue of the command, Increase and multiply, became a complete imitator of the copies set her by the Protoplast. Thus perhaps may all things be originated from aether, & c.¹²

Celestial effluvia, Newton proposes in a draft of an intended future edition of the *Principia*, may be responsible for the formation of terrestrial bodies:

The vapours which arise from the sun, the fixed stars, and the tails of the comets, may meet at last with, and fall into, the atmospheres of the planets by their gravity, and there be condensed and turned into water and humid spirits; and from thence, by a slow heat, pass gradually into the form of salts, and sulphurs, and tinctures, and mud, and clay, and sand, and stones, and coral, and other terrestrial substances.¹³

Anne Conway argues similarly in her *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* that the distinction between body and spirit is only one of mode and not of substance, much like the distinction between ice, liquid water, and water vapour.¹⁴ For her, as for Origen, the condensation of spirit into body is a consequence of a sort of moral failure, described now not as distraction but as 'sluggishness'. And it is not so far from Conway's metaphysics to Leibniz's conception of the embodiment of monads as a consequence of their confused perception – monads, themselves immaterial, perceive the world and themselves as a combination of corporeal substances, but only because they lack the perspicacity to perceive the immaterial monads directly. If they were not in this dejected state – 'confused', for Leibniz, 'sluggish' for Conway, 'cold', 'bored', and 'distracted' for Origen – they would see right through the phenomenal realm of bodies to the things themselves. But this sort of clear-sightedness is reserved for God alone.

¹² In Boyle R., *Works*, 14 vols. (Brookfield, Vt: 1999) I, 174.

¹³ Newton I., *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (Cambridge: 1713²). Cited in Schechner-Genuth S., *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology* (Princeton: 1997) 146.

¹⁴ Conway A., *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, tr. and ed. A.P. Coudert (Cambridge: 1996).

C. *The Endurance of Galenic Vitalism in Physiology*

In the Hippocratic tradition, pneuma is conceived as an aerial, vaporous substance essential for the constitution of our bodies. In Aristotle, the concoction of the blood in the male body results in semen, which is the bearer of the pneuma in animal reproduction that brings the 'soul source' to the menstrual blood contributed by the mother. The semen is concocted and extracted from the blood, yielding a product that bears much the same relationship to the blood that Agricola would later take his *spiritus panis* bears to a loaf. In Galen, pneuma is the fundamental principle of life. *Pneuma physikon* or animal spirit in the brain takes care of motion, perception and sensation. *Pneuma zotikon* or vital spirit in the heart controls the temperature of the blood, while natural spirit in the liver regulates nutrition and metabolism.

It is often maintained that physiology and medicine were slower to abandon inherited ancient models in the early modern period than were the sciences of physics and mechanics. Certainly, Galenism was still prevalent in late-seventeenth-century medical literature. In Blancardus' *Lexicon medicum* of 1683, for example, a standard medical reference work of the late seventeenth century, 'Spiritus' is distinguished along Galenic lines into three different kinds, the animal, vital, and natural, issued and regulated by the brain, heart, and liver respectively. As an alternative, the author notes that some may locate the animal spirits in the brain, while taking the vital and the natural as the same thing and locating it in the blood. The animal spirits, he writes, 'sunt latices tenuissimi.' The vital and natural spirits, in turn, 'sunt subtilissimae sanguinis partes.'¹⁵ What is key to note here is that, several decades after Descartes' effort to redefine the traditional physiological notion of spirit, the capacity for activity – a capacity traditionally identified with soul or soul-likeness – is still being identified with subtility. The subtler, the quicker – this both in the old sense of 'quick', i.e., living or vital (retained in the antonymic phrase 'the quick and the dead'), and in the sense of swiftness.

One prominent defender of the role of spirit in physiology in the second half of the seventeenth century is the Cambridge Platonist Henry More. More understands the essence of spirit not as a *res cogitans* but rather as a substance that is *penetrable and indiscerpible*, and thus, by

¹⁵ Blancardus S., *Lexicon medicum* (Hildesheim: 1970 [1683]) 446.

Descartes' standards, attributes to spirit more of a share in the bodily than is acceptable or even coherent. In the *Immortality of the Soul* of 1659, More justifies this definition as follows:

The fitness of [this] Definition will be the better understood, if we divide *Substance* in generall into these first kindes, viz. *Body* and *Spirit*, and then define *Body* to be *A Substance impenetrable and discernible*. Whence the contrary kind to this is fitly defined, *A Substance penetrable and indiscernible*.¹⁶

In the *Antidote against Atheisme*, we have a somewhat more lengthy elaboration of the differences between the two kinds of substance. The 'Essentiall and Inseparable properties' of spirit are 'Self-penetration, Self-Motion, Self-contraction and Dilatation, and Indivisibility', and in addition it has the relational properties 'of Penetrating, Moving, or Altering the Matter.' Body, in turn, 'whose parts cannot penetrate one another, is not Self-moveable, nor can contract nor dilate itself, is divisible and separable one part from another.'¹⁷ Clearly, even though More sees spirit and body as two entirely distinct kinds of substance, by Cartesian standards spirit partakes in important respects of the corporeal: to wit, it is extended, and thus wholly unlike what Descartes imagined the non-bodily to be. But for More, Descartes' dualism could not work, since it posited two absolutely distinct realms, mind and extension, but held that the one could, in spite of its absolute distinctness, communicate motion to the other. More, while holding that spirit and body are, in a sense, absolutely distinct, gets around Descartes' problem by maintaining that spirit moves body not by transference of motion but instead by permeating and activating body from within.

The fact that More sees spirit as working within and activating body, rather than as fundamentally unconnected to body, makes his search for the *sedes animae* in a particular part or system of the body a somewhat more sensible task than Descartes' well-known promotion of the pineal gland for this role. In *The Immortality of the Soul* More lists a number of body parts that could not be the seat of the soul, including the 'Orifice of the Stomack', the brain, the membranes, and the heart. Of the last, he notes that

¹⁶ More H., *The Immortality of the Soul*, in *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* (London: 1667) 21.

¹⁷ More H., *An Antidote Against Atheism or, an Appeal to the Naturall Faculties of the Minde of Man, whether there be not a God* (London: J. Flesher, 1655).

if it were that common Percipient, [who can imagine that] there is any Mechanical connexion betwixt it and all the parts of the Body, that it may, by such a perception command the motion of the Foot or little Finger? Besides that it seems wholly employed in the performance of its Systole and Diastole, which causes such a great difference of the Heart by turns, that if it were that Seat in which the sense of all Objects centre, we should not be able to see things steddily or fix our sight in the same place.¹⁸

More's final declaration is that 'the chief Seat of the Soul, where she perceives all Objects, where she imagines, reasons, and invents, and from whence she commands all the parts of the Body, is those purer Animal Spirits in the fourth Ventricle of the Brain.'¹⁹ He argues for this conclusion as follows:

Now the immediate Instrument of the functions of the Soul is that thinner Matter which they ordinarily call Animal Spirits [...]. And even those that have placed the Common Sensorium in the Heart, have been secure of the truth of this their conceit, because they took it for granted, that the left Ventricle thereof was the fountain of these pure and subtile Spirits [...].²⁰

And he cites Hippocrates in support of his own argument. The Greek physician had held 'That the Mind of man is in the left Ventricle of his Heart', so he had the particular organ wrong. But Hippocrates' account of what the organ does is, More thinks, comparable to his own account of the fourth ventricle: the mind 'is not nourished from meats and drinks from the belly, but by a clear and luminous Substance that redounds by separation from the blood.'²¹

More goes on to list a number of organic processes that in his view can only be due to the activity of a subtle and quick body pervading what would otherwise be sluggish and dead. He attributes the initiation of the process of fetal development to the 'plastick power of soul', 'where the Body is alwaies organized out of thin fluid liquor', and cites with approval Regius's observations of a slug, in which, 'so soon as she begins to creep, certain Bubbles are discovered to move from her tail to her head; but so soon as she ceases moving, those Bubbles cease.' Whence it is to be concluded '[t]hat a gale of Spirits that circult from her head along her back to her tail, and thence along her belly to her

¹⁸ More H., *Immortality*, 104.

¹⁹ More H., *Immortality*, 125.

²⁰ More H., *Immortality*, 126.

²¹ *Ibid.*

head again, is the cause of her progressive motion.’²² As for the more noble operations of the mind, such as meditation and the excogitation of theorems, it is clear that this is an activity of the animal spirits and not the brain, since ‘the very consistency [of the latter] is so clammy and sluggish’, and thus unsuitable for such fine and subtle activities as geometry. More identifies the spirits with the heavenly or ethereal matter that Ficino held to constitute heaven, and with ‘the Fire which Trismegist affirms is the inward vehicle of the Mind, and the instrument that God used in the forging of the world, and which the Soul of the world, where ever she acts, does most certainly still use.’²³

D. *Spirit as Medium for Action at a Distance*

In connection with the medical discussion of spirit, one very important question in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the nature of contagious disease. Thus the Aristotelian physician Fracastoro, in his *On Contagion*, concerns himself with those sorts of contagion that act at a distance, such as ‘pestiferous fevers, phthisis, and many other diseases [that] infect those who live with the sufferer, even though there is no actual contact.’ This happens, he explains, when the spirit in the ambient environment becomes putrefied. He notes also that ‘[t]here is a kind of ophthalmia with which the sufferer infects everyone who looks at him.’ Fracastoro insists that such things are not to be explained by occult properties, but by ‘spiritual qualities’, which are ‘the manifestations and images of material qualities.’²⁴ Joan Baptista van Helmont writes similarly of the torpedo fish that ‘throws the poison of its glance [...] on the person who is drawing in the ropes [of the nets] from a distance.’²⁵ How can this seeming action at a distance happen without recourse to occult forces? For Helmont as for Fracastoro, the subtlety of the spiritual qualities – or, for Helmont, spirituous effluvium – that traverse the distance between the fish and the fisherman enables him to account for a causal relationship between the glance and the effect in terms of the very rapid motion of a subperceptible substance. Effectively,

²² More H., *Immortality*, 127f.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Fracastoro G., *Hieronymi Fracastorii De contagione et contagiosis morbis et eorum curatione*, libri III, tr. W.C. Wright. (New York: 1930).

²⁵ Helmont J.B. van, *Opera omnia* I (Frankfurt: 1682) 541.

Fracastoro and Helmont are offering a non-occult account of that old staple of occultism, the evil eye.

Some scholars have discerned the connection between the evil-eye complex and the ancient connection between moisture and vital principles. Alan Dundes, for example, notes that the opposition between wet and dry is a fundamental folk conception of nature, perhaps universal in Indo-European and Semitic conceptions of nature, an idea that is in its basis correlated with the opposition between life and death. This folk expression is given theoretical expression in the Greek medical theory of humoral pathology. G.E.R. Lloyd confirms this when he notes that, 'As regards the pair dry and wet, several usages suggest that the Greeks conceived the living as "wet" and the dead as "dry".'²⁶ In Aristotle, we learn that, 'The living creature is by nature moist and warm, and to live is to be such, but old age is cold and dry and so is what had died [...]. It is inevitable that one who grows old should dry.' In Aristotle, then, the process of corruption is in part one of dessication. As Onians has noted, in the Greek theory of humours the evil eye has the power to accelerate this process, since it has a dessicating power; as one Greek source puts it, 'Sight is an excessively hot vapour.'²⁷

E. *Vapour as Natural Symbol*

Why did the vapour metaphor seem to be compelling, not just as a metaphor but as an account of the transition of entities between the corporeal and the incorporeal? We may suggest that the vapour generated by smoke machines in the theatre is a sort of natural symbol, in Mary Douglas's sense:²⁸ itself a visible body that naturally calls to mind the invisible and thus otherworldly by perpetually transitioning into the invisible as new smoke is pumped out to replace it. That very young children make the connection between the vapour on stage and an aura of extramundanity may indicate that the tradition of thinking about spirits that Descartes would have liked to overturn was one that simply rested content with childish imaginings. But it may also indicate

²⁶ Lloyd G.E.R., "Hot and Cold, Dry and Wet in Early Greek Thought", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 84 (1964) 92–106.

²⁷ Onians R.B., *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate* (Cambridge: 1954) 76.

²⁸ See Douglas M., *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: 1970).

that our very idea of incorporeal reality has not just to do with our experience of ourselves as thinking things, but also with our basic and primitive experience of the regular phase changes of elements in nature, and particularly the phase changes of water. That so many thinkers in the late seventeenth century – among them, as we have seen, Conway and Newton – were satisfied with the ‘spirit:body:vapour:water’ analogy strongly suggests as much.

3. *Spirit as Ineliminable Intermediary*

Why were so many natural philosophers of the late seventeenth century unable to give up the ghost? One of the enduring anxieties of seventeenth-century natural philosophy was that, having reconstrued the world as a self-contained system of intrinsically inert bodies, God would be left with very little to do and may for that reason quickly appear otiose and antiquated. God could no longer serve as an inspiration for the motion of bodies – as in Aristotle – nor as a force that perpetually whips things into motion. The new natural philosophy threatened to estrange God and the world. Similarly, with the soul reconstrued as only contingently connected to a body, rather than as itself the principle of quickening *of* the body itself, the early moderns were left at a loss as to how to explain how it is that a soul, contingently embodied, but embodied nonetheless, can really get ‘mixed up’ with its body if it has absolutely nothing in common with it. In both cases, an intermediary principle can help a great deal to heal the wound that resulted from the abrupt separation of the two realms. As Cureau de la Chambre had it, it is the same intermediary that connects both God and nature on the one hand, and mind and body on the other, namely, spirit.

Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, in the period of what Mercer has called ‘second-wave mechanism’, much natural-philosophical debate was focused on whether it is really possible to account for all natural phenomena in the austere terms Descartes had laid out. A number of philosophers found themselves deviating in varying degrees from the original project of mechanism, and in particular they were concerned that procreation, and animal physiology in general, indeed could not be explained in terms of the ‘minor causes’ Descartes envisioned. Thus, for example, Leibniz asserts that ‘I fully agree that all particular phenomena of nature can be explained mechanically if

we explore them enough, and that we cannot understand the causes of material things on any other basis.²⁹ For Leibniz, a mechanical explanation of all natural phenomena, including the motion and generation of animals, is only possible if the status of 'mechanism' is conceded to entities that consist in infinitely many other mechanisms or machines of nature, each of which is itself an organic body belonging to a corporeal substance or animal. The animal's body must be conceived as no less a machine than is a clock, even if it is infinitely more complicated than the clock.

Some, such as Boyle, who would want to defend a pure form of mechanism that rejects any notion of plastic nature, archeus, or vicegerent of God, would argue that the 'quickening' effect in nature can be brought about by natural bodies – again, of the subvisible or effluvial sort – in the environment themselves. Thus Boyle argues that, at least for some species, the air surrounding a creature may be seen as a sort of external soul or principle of life. Having placed a number of insects in his air pump, he notes that

When the external air is permitted again to return upon them, they will presently be revived (as I have with pleasure tried), and be brought to move again, according to their respective kinds; as if a fly, for instance, resembled a little windmill in this: that being moveless of itself, it required the action of the air to put its wings and other parts into motion.³⁰

Boyle would hope to explain, by appeal to the influence of the air, the same natural phenomena that some of his adversaries would seek to explain by appeal to vital or plastic principles in nature. One way of understanding mechanist natural philosophy is as the project of eradicating appeal to spirit-like principles in the explanation of natural phenomena. This project was often seen as being in the service of true piety, since to attribute spirit to nature is either to endow it with at least a bit of God-likeness, or, if the spirit be that of God himself, to lapse into the pagan mistake of conceiving God as the soul of the world. Conceiving the world as a great machine, and God as the perfect machinist, who built a world so great as to require no subsequent

²⁹ Leibniz G.W., *Die philosophischen Schriften von G.W. Leibniz*, ed. C.I. Gerhardt, IV (Berlin: 1880) 390.

³⁰ Boyle R., *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*, ed. E.B. Davis – M. Hunter (Cambridge: 1996) 90.

tinkering or refuelling, is an urgent imperative for the preservation of Christianity against the atheists.

For Ralph Cudworth, to draw on another example from late-seventeenth-century English natural philosophy, Cartesian mechanism without some supplementary role for spirit is patently atheistic, since it allows nature, given a fixed quantity of motion, to function altogether on its own, without any perceived need for phenomena to be explained by non-material causes. What Cudworth comes up with in response is a novel combination of mechanistic atomism with a Platonic-esoteric metaphysics of spirit and matter. Spirit itself is a sort of approximation of God, thus keeping God efficacious in the world neither as a micro-manager nor as himself its animating force, but rather as the transcendent paragon of this-worldly spiritual activity, mired as it unfortunately is in the muck of material becoming.

For Cudworth the plastic nature of the world is nothing other than an 'Inferior and Subordinate Instrument' of God, which 'doth Drudgingly Execute that Part of his Providence, which consists in the Regular and Orderly Motion of Matter.' This universal plastic nature is what keeps the inanimate or inorganic parts of the world moving in accordance with natural laws. Expressing his commitment to the first of the two sorts of plastic nature, Cudworth, for instance, writes that 'there is a *Mixture of Life or Plastick Nature* together with *Mechanism*, which runs through the whole Corporeal Universe.'³¹ Cudworth's concern is to keep God out of the operations of nature, while finding some way to account for the complex phenomena of nature in a way that appeal to intrinsically inert matter alone evidently cannot. God *would* be responsible for the quickening of the machine of nature, were he not prohibited from interfering by the dignity of his office, and so something subordinate yet God-like must be posited to do what is beneath God, and beyond inert matter.

Similarly, for figures such as Cureau de la Chambre, something mind-like must be posited to carry out what is beneath mind, and beyond crude and sluggish body. While Descartes makes a bold move in declaring spirit a mere body, he also notoriously has tremendous difficulty explaining how willings result in bodily motions, and how we

³¹ Cudworth R., *True Intellectual System of the Universe: Wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted, and Its Impossibility Demonstrated*, 3 vols. (London: 1845) I.3.37, art. 3.

become conscious of the heat of fire burning our toes. If body is body, and soul soul, however could the twain meet? By identifying the pineal gland as the site of mind-body interaction, Descartes ultimately invokes an intermediary as well, but he does so at the cost of coherence: for the pineal gland is a body, just like, on his reading, the animal spirits, and so it is entirely unclear how it could serve as a bridge between the two domains that are, on his view, entirely dissimilar. How much safer one would be to posit an entity that enables commerce between the two domains.

Certainly, where spirit is invoked, for what explanatory tasks, is telling. It would seem that spirit is seen as playing a role when recourse would otherwise need to be taken to miraculous, supernatural, or occult causation, and this in either of two ways. First, in the case of the new, naturalised account of the evil eye, the spiritual does what earlier thinkers, unconcerned with naturalism, would have attributed to the active power of souls or minds, but as a body, and thus through the same channels of causation familiar to us from mundane events involving the interaction of denser bodies like cannonballs. Second, spirit is invoked to mediate between ontological domains – such as that of God and that of nature, or that of the soul and that of the body – that have been defined as absolutely off limits to one another. In both cases, a critic might wish to say that those who invoke spirit are seeking to have their cake and eat it too. In the first case, occult phenomena are being preserved, while occult forces are denied; in the second case, two realms are defined as wholly separate, and then, by spirit, connected.

Like the angels of mist poetically evoked by Milton, or the otherworldliness suggested by the smoke machine behind the curtain, spirit is in the end but the suggestion of transition between worlds – between the incorporeal, of which we can form no clear idea, and the mundane, which is readily available to the senses, but has seemed to many not to contain within it the principles that would serve as the ultimate explanations for the variety of things to which the senses have access. Being a mere suggestion, or poetical evocation, and not a solution, Descartes was sharp and right to demand that spirit be moved to one side or the other. But we might discern a connection between the sort of ontological split Descartes demanded and the need perceived by others for intermediaries. To the extent that God becomes a *Deus absconditus* (as, arguably, for Origen), we might discern a corresponding interest in adducing armies of archangels and lesser heavenly beings

that might evoke the divine without thereby pulling down or degrading the God who cannot, given his nature, be thought or imagined. To the extent that the soul is relieved of its traditional task – as *anima* – of animating a body, there may be a corresponding motivation to attribute soul-like activity to some part of the body or system of the body that in its subtlety suggests some connection to the immaterial realm of the soul.

The full account of the role of spirit in late-seventeenth-century natural philosophy would place this hypothetical entity within the context of a physics and a biology that could not yet account for the range of complex natural phenomena demanding explanation. In the case of spirit as a rarefied fluid of the body responsible for its vitality, its invocation should be understood within the context of a larger debate as to whether life – and, more urgently, human life – could be accounted for by appeal to physiological processes, or whether what makes the difference lies altogether outside the bounds of physiology. At the one extreme in this debate, we find some, such as Edward Tyson, who after dissecting a chimpanzee in 1699 finds many points of physiological similarity between his specimen and human beings, but identifies what makes a human the sort of creature it is in something altogether unconnected to physiology:

The Organs in Animal Bodies are only a regular Compages of Pipes and Vessels, for the Fluids to pass through, and are passive. What actuates them, are the Humours and Fluids: and Animal Life consists in their due and regular motion in this Organical Body. But those Nobler Faculties in the Mind of Man, must certainly have a higher Principle; and Matter organized could never produce them; for why else, where the Organ is the same, should not the Actions be the same too? and if all depended on the Organ, not only our Pygmie, but other Brutes likewise, would be too near akin to us [...]. In truth Man is part a Brute, part an Angel; and is that Link in the Creation, that joyns them both together.³²

At the other extreme, we have those who argue that mental faculties may be traced to particular anatomical features. Thus in 1658 John Bulwer argued that we could be certain of the absence of a soul in apes, in view of their anatomical difference from us. ‘Indeed, the bodies of other Creatures’, he writes, ‘are not capable of mans soule, because they are not of that Fabrick, temper, and constitution, if they were

³² Tyson E., *Orang-Outang, sive Homo Sylvestris: or, the Anatomy of a Pygmie Compared with that of a Monkey, an Ape, and a Man* (London: 1699) 54f.

capable; yet, for want of fit Organs the soule could not exercise her actions.³³ In 1672, similarly, Thomas Willis identifies the complexity of human action and deliberation with the elaborately folded surface of the human brain:

Those Gyrationes or Turnings about in [the brains of] four footed beasts are fewer, and in some, as in a Cat, they are found to certain figure and order: wherefore this Brute thinks on, or remembers scarce any thing but what the instincts and needs of Nature suggest. In the lesser four-footed beasts, also in Fowls and Fishes, the superficies of the brain being plain and even, wants all cranklings and turnings about: wherefore these sort of Animals comprehend or learn by imitation fewer things, and those almost only of one kind; for that in such, distinct cells, and parted one from another, are wanting in which the divers Species and Ideas of things are kept apart.³⁴

For Willis, as for Bulwer, there are sufficient physiological markers of a profound difference between humans and animals to assure us of our unique place in nature without having to leave the bounds of empirical science and engage in metaphysical disputations about the possession of a soul.

Descartes' interpretation of 'spirit' makes it out to be as physiological as the 'cranklings' of the brain, yet it is also, for him, only responsible for somatic processes, which include animal perception but definitely not human cogitation. For this, Descartes' explanation is as indifferent to physiology as Tyson's subsequent account of the real difference between humans and apes. For others who invoke spirit, however, both before and after Descartes, they do so in order to stake out some middle ground between the physiologist's account of life and cognition on the one hand, and the dualist account on the other. Spirit in their view is ultimately a product of a physiological system: it is the most rarefied fluid, produced either in a ventricle of the heart or of the brain; yet its invisibility at least gives it the appearance of affinity with the soul. Descartes' argument is that this is only an appearance: that which thinks and is immortal could no more be a vapour than it could be – as one oft-cited tradition was thought to hold – a bone. Descartes'

³³ Bulwer J., *Anthropometamorphosis, A viewv of the people of the vvhole vvorld* (London: 1658) 445.

³⁴ Willis T., *De anima brutorum* (1672), in *Opera omnia* (Lyon: 1676) 76. For an interesting discussion of Willis's easy passage between anatomy and psychology, see Bynum W.F., "The Anatomical Method, Natural Theology, and the Functions of the Brain", *Isis* 64, 4 (December 1973) 444–468.

bold claim that spirit is only a variety of body, and that mental life has nothing to do with spirit, lies at the foundation of both his physiological mechanism and his mind-body dualism. His immediate successors in the latter half of the seventeenth century seem to have been more offended by the mechanist claim that vitality and animal perception are purely somatic processes than by the dualist claim that thought has nothing to do with body. Yet it is the former claim that would prove to be a more fruitful and lasting principle of scientific research, while the latter – the one Descartes' immediate successors were not yet ready to give up – has turned out to be rather more contentious.

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THE MOTIONS OF LAUGHTER:
ALLEGORY AND PHYSIOLOGY IN WALTER CHARLETON'S
NATURAL HISTORY OF THE PASSIONS (1674)

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Walter Charleton's *Natural History of the Passions*¹ stages a confrontation between two opposed canons of the human body. The struggle is over the terms and conditions – the laws governing – the representability of the body. The drama results in a confused text from the perspective of modern scientific or medical disciplinarity, but one that should be recognised as an important antecedent precisely for its confusions, for the ways in which it dramatises epistemological uncertainty, contingency, and change. Charleton is trying to conceive of the human body as inert matter in the newly prevailing regime of materialism, but he must do so without benefit of a language of physiology and, indeed, without awareness of precisely what he lacks or of what he is reaching for. His *Natural History* draws instead on what is ready to hand, a combination of chiefly metaphysical, iatrochemical, and allegorical language, a muddle that is made comprehensible when read as a productive instance of the historical process of genre.²

The very possibility and necessity of speaking of canons of the body arises from the human body's peculiar situation as both precondition and product of discourse and knowledge. Hence, all knowledge constitutes an ordering of the body in the world. Such ordering enables and constrains discourse, determining what is visible, valued, and subject to verbal representation. Yet any particular discourse can only be realised by way of the organising device of genre, a term I understand not

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¹ (London: 1674). Quotations hereafter will be cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

² It is described as 'a strange potpourri of divergent theory illustrative of the muddle of psychological thought in which the seventeenth century found itself' in Thorpe C. de Witt, *The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (Ann Arbor: 1940) 181.

merely as a matter of wilfully selected rhetorical form, but as osmotic social and historical conventions that set the boundaries of what can be said, and generate what is said within those boundaries. My use of the term contrasts, too, with the notion of genre as a means of classifying literature, as if the activity and utterance of classification somehow preceded and stood above genre. The relation is the other way around: genres provide the principles of organisation and recognition.³

For convenience, and to avoid overly intricate taxonomies, I can identify the opposed canons in Charleton's work as grotesque and natural. I refer to the 'grotesque bodily canon' in Bakhtin's sense, and I use the term natural, and the naturalised bodily canon, in the modern medical sense of a discrete biological organism, representative of the species, yet apparently abstracted from symbolic language and anthropocentric hierarchies of value. The grotesque body is characterised by an ambivalence deriving from its simultaneous orientation both to social, historical life and to the individual, biological organism. Genres of the grotesque canon stress this duality, whereas those of the natural canon are based on its suppression. Grotesque genres emphasise the surfaces and orifices of the body where the individual conjoins with the world, whereas naturalised genres emphasise the boundaries that individuate bodies in order to concentrate on the body's inner workings. Genres of the naturalised bodily canon cannot recognise and therefore cannot represent the human body in its simultaneously individual and social aspects, which genres of the grotesque canon cannot fail to do.

Charleton designates his work as a natural history in the seventeenth-century sense, a genre modelled on Pliny, who draws, in turn, on the grotesque canon comprising allegory, fable, and other ambivalent forms. In its early modern guise, natural history takes its subject matter and organisational contrivances, especially its reliance on allegorical correspondence as the means of narrative movement, from Pliny, but draws also on iatrochemistry, the discourse and vocabulary adapted from alchemy by the later false alchemists, from Paracelsus (1492–1541) to Jean-Baptiste Van Helmont (c. 1577–c. 1644).⁴ Most crucially, sev-

³ This conception of genre is derived from Bakhtin M.M., "The Problem of Speech Genres", *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, tr. V.W. McGee (Austin: 1986) 60–102, and *Rabelais and His World*, tr. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington: 1984) 303–436. References to 'discourse' derive from Foucault M., *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: 1970) 125–165.

⁴ Walter Charleton was an Oxford-trained physician and, as physician-in-ordinary to Charles I, a junior colleague of William Harvey. Between 1648 and 1650, he was

enteenth-century natural history is motivated by newly formulating questions spanning metaphysics and physics, and indeed, takes its particular seventeenth-century form as the genre concerned to locate the boundary between those two, as typified, for example, by Thomas Browne's encyclopaedic '*Vulgar Errors*,' which seeks the boundaries of what is subject to physical laws and what is not.⁵ In effect, it asks: what is part of nature and what is part of history? Where are the boundaries of nature? In Charleton, the subject matter of the passions derives from the grotesque canon and its conception of the body. But his aim of knowing the passions in order to regulate them depends upon the appearance and recognition of the natural body, or the body in nature. Yet the conception of the human body as a complex of purely material processes situates the body outside the control of human will and therefore of regulation. So the very concerns that make Charleton's project historically urgent render it impossible within received genres.

The confrontation of the grotesque and the natural body is nowhere more in evidence than in Charleton's account of the motions of laughter. That laughter is treated at all is a sign of this text's position on the border of two different ways of viewing the world. Laughter is inseparable from the canon of the grotesque body. Yet laughter is not isolated for consideration in similar accounts of the passions by Charleton's English predecessors, Thomas Wright (*The Passions of the Minde*, 1601) and Edward Reynolds (*A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man*, 1640). Charleton's explanation was not possible for those authors because, without the enabling genre of natural history as it developed linkages with practices of anatomy and proto-physiology through the seventeenth century, the body could not be isolated as an object of study. But neither was his explanation possible afterwards, as the individualised and medicalised human body became ever more completely divorced from language and culture, as in Thomas Willis's work on the brain.⁶ Charleton's straddling of two distinct canons of knowledge prompts and enables him to deal with both the laughing

the chief populariser and English translator of works by Jean-Baptiste van Helmont, the authoritative proponent of animist materialism. With the publication in 1650 of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Charleton abruptly abandoned Van Helmontian vitalism, and became a proponent of Hobbesian materialism. Charleton's conversion, however earnest, was never complete, as should become clear in the present discussion.

⁵ Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. Robin Robbins, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1981).

⁶ Willis T., *Two Discourses Concerning the Soul of Brutes, Which is That of the Vital and Sensitive Man* (Latin ed. 1672, English ed. 1683), tr. S. Pordage (Gainesville, FL: 1971).

body (the subject of laughter) and the admixture of things that set it in motion (the objects of laughter). He treats subject and object as if they were separate, yet inseparable, making visible laughter as a bodily motion produced in the link – the point of articulation – between the body and language, between the body and culture, the individual body and the body politic. In laughter, perhaps, the body is sensibly aware of this linkage and of its own profoundly conventional rather than strictly biological character. We could say that laughter is the sensation of the ground of meaning shifting beneath the feet, a finding that rather elevates the cultural value of laughter in human processes of adaptation and change.

The characterisation of laughter in Charleton's *Natural History* is distinct from the two prevailing but competing views in literary and medical modernity. One consists of various theories of superiority, associated with Plato, Hobbes, Freud, and Bergson, all of which focus on the subject of laughter and the subject's relative power in discursive exchange. The other view, of incongruity, is associated with Kant, Schopenhauer, and Emerson, and focuses on the object(s) of laughter in texts and phenomena.⁷ Neither approach can deal with the relationship between the laughing subject and its object as Charleton must. Before Charleton's *Natural History*, with its particular generic tensions, there could be no awareness of the historical linkages of subject and object because there was no awareness of their separation. After Charleton, when, in fully realised medical discourses and genres of physiology, the separation was complete, the linkage of the individual body – to anything – becomes irrelevant and, finally, inconceivable.

Charleton registers awareness of generic difficulties when he explains his methodology in the "Epistle Prefatory":

I digested my Collections and private Sentiments into such an order or *Method* which seem'd to me most convenient, as well as to show their genuin [sic] succession, and mutual dependence, as to make the Antecedents support the Consequents, and both to illustrate each other reciprocally [sic]. I put them also into a dress of *Language* so plain and familiar, as may alone evince, my design was to write of this Argument, neither as an Orator, nor as a Moral Philosopher, but only as a *Natural* one conversant in *Pathology* (n.p.).

⁷ Purdy S., *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse* (Toronto: 1993) 9.

The self-conscious concern with 'succession' indicates awareness of the rhetorical organisation of cause and effect – the still vigorous trope of scientific modernity – and signals the problem of mediation: the need for ameliorative mediation in the separation of physiological bodies from the semantic networks that previously articulated them. The preoccupation with mediation animates and even dominates Charleton's *Natural History*. It is the productive mechanism of his location of the body-in-nature and formulation of its physiological language. Paradoxically, the exhaustive work done by Charleton's *Natural History* to identify the material of mediation – from the 'third thing,' to the 'Sensitive Soul,' the 'subtle bodies,' the 'motions of Laughter,' and the faculty of the will – facilitates their isolation and potential exclusion from genres of the naturalised bodily canon; this is how Charleton's work negatively shapes the new genre. For lack of a better term, but quite aptly after all, he refers initially to the mechanism of mediation as the 'third thing.' We shall see how Charleton's 'third thing' opens up questions of the body, its spirits, its allegories and motions, and isolates each for exclusion in newly differentiating genres of treatment.

Charleton's Third Thing: The Body as Intertext

A preoccupation with specifying the material of mediation between body and soul establishes the limitations of the genres available for Charleton's discussion. With the aim of finding a way to direct human desires to the right objects, he begins by posing two questions. He asks, what is the material of mediation between body and soul? And how might that material be manipulated in order to control the passions? Descartes had asserted that the soul acts on the body 'by the mediation of spirits, nerves, and even blood, which, participating in the impressions of the spirits, can carry them through the arteries into all the members.'⁸ But in asking how 'an Immaterial Agent [...] comes to move by impulse a solid body without the mediation of a third thing that is less [...] disproportionate to both' ("Epistle Prefatory" n.p.), Charleton locates the boundary of a metaphysical conception of the body and also the lack of a language of physiology. Iatrochemical language, with its 'solid' and 'subtle' bodies, and its placement of 'spirits' on a plane with

⁸ Descartes R., *The Passions of the Soul*, tr. S.H. Voss (Indianapolis: 1989) 37.

'nerves' and 'fibres,' is the rather grotesque register of this boundary. Charleton's *Natural History* shifts, repeatedly and tellingly, at this very boundary, to allegory, a genre that by definition conceives of the human body as fully 'intertextd' of, or with, both nature and history (14).

In the attempt to get at the 'third thing' in physical and physiological terms, Charleton ends up writing about the body as well as the soul as dual, one part 'Rational' or 'Reasonable,' and the other part 'Sensitive.' The Sensitive Soul is that which mediates between the gross body and the reason, and the key to mediating the 'fatal discord' of reason and passion, the 'civil war too frequently hapning betwixt these twins, which every Man sometimes feels in his own breast [...] inclining us two contrary waies at once' (53–4). Descartes had insisted that there is one soul 'which hath in her no variety of parts' (qtd. in Charleton's "Epistle Prefatory"). The nature of the soul was still debatable, however, because 'her functions have not been sufficiently distinguished from the function of the Body; to which alone is to be ascribed all that can be observed in us to be repugnant to our reason' ("Epistle"). Charleton then mobilises the authorities, from Aristotle and Francis Bacon to his contemporary, Thomas Willis, who posit instead the duality of the soul.

Charleton insists that the Sensitive Soul is 'coextensive' with the body, in that body and soul have the same limits or extent. It is, in effect, a 'subtle body.' This is demonstrated in the simultaneity of the motions of the senses:

[M]any and divers Animal actions are daily observed to be, at one and the same time, performed by divers Parts and members of the Body: for instance, the eye sees, the Ear hears, the Nostrils smell, the tongue tasteth, and all exterior Members exercise their Sense and Motion, all at once. For as much then as betwixt the Body and Soul of a Brute, there is no Medium (both being intimately connexed) [...] (6).

No intermediary is required because there is no identifiable place where the Sensitive Soul joins with the body, and no place where it is separable from it. Because it is inseparable from the physical body, the material nature of the Sensitive Soul can only be known first by analogy (with fire), then by association (with the blood), and finally, in unabashedly metaphorical terms, as an intertext.⁹

⁹ The OED enters this word in the form of 'intertext'. It records William Harvey as among the first to use it but with the more recognisable spelling, 'intertext.' In 1666,

Charleton's Sensitive Soul is of a 'mixed nature,' consisting of 'a certain congregation of most minute, subtle and agile particles, corpuscles or atoms (call them what you please)' (10). Note that this parenthetical 'call them what you please' signals the problem of mediation. Charleton specifies that these atoms are in substance and in their motions 'analogous to Fire' (9). Like fire, the Sensitive Soul 'consists in motion' (14), but also functions to 'actuate' or to set the body in motion (52). This motion is material in that a physical body is moved as a result of a chemical reaction. It is 'fed' with the earthly nutrients of sulphur 'from the blood within' and nitrogen 'from the aer without' (10). The evidence of this materiality is the negative proposition that the lack of either nutrient destroys the blood and therefore, by association, the Sensitive Soul:

that Blood, and Fire subsist by the same principles, viz. Aliment and Ventilation; is evident from hence, that a defect of either of these, doth equally destroy both the one and the other. (9)

Charleton repeatedly draws on the figures of analogy and association in this way because the relationship, indeed the soul itself, though 'sensitive,' is insensible to observation. His inability to account for the mediation between body and soul in strictly material terms leads him to a de-facto theory of language based on his theory of soul and body as dual. The fire-like substance and motion of the Sensitive Soul is an 'intertexture' that 'may be, by continually repeated supplies of Spirits, rendered equal and coextensive to the body' (23). The mediating 'third thing' turns out to be a fabric or text woven of 'representations sensible' supplied by the body (50). In other words, it turns out to be language itself, or something very like it:

[A] Sensitive Soul may be conceived to be a most subtle body contained in a gross one, and in all points, of the same Figure with it [...]. But though the same be intimately united to the body, and everywhere closely intertexd with all parts of it; as the warp and woof are interwoven in cloth: yet so fine and subtle are the threads of which it doth consist, that it cannot possibly by our senses be discerned, nor indeed be known, otherwise than by its own Effects and Operations. (13–14)

Harvey writes of the 'heart [...] consisting of robust fibres variously intertext.' Charleton uses 'intertext,' 'intertextd,' and 'intertexture' in his *Natural History*.

These 'Effects and Operations' are the 'signs' which spell out the passions. Like any text, they must be read. In this way, the Sensitive Soul is conceived to be, finally, a textual or text-like linkage of the physical organism to the social, historical world in which it appears, and in which its passions may be understood, if not regulated. Charleton's material soul is therefore a dual body, inseparable from its representation in language. And this duality of the body, its inseparability from language, is the central tenet of the grotesque canon of the body.

From the outset of his inquiry, Charleton's conception of the body as grotesque – as cultural and historical and 'intertextd' with language – is at odds with his attempt to locate a purely physiological basis for its motions. His answer to the question of how to manipulate the mechanism of the passions further registers this tension. He tries to find a basis in nature – that is, in purely physical processes – for the body's regulation. But because his assumption is of the body as grotesque, he can find no such basis, or foundation. Instead, he finds only the absolute mutability of all hierarchies. Like Hobbes, or following Hobbes, he finds that the only constant element and therefore the only possible fixed point from which to regulate the passions is the perpetual motion of bodies. But while Hobbes orders the body politic in such a way as to accommodate and productively channel perpetually moving (or desiring) bodies, Charleton, the physician, tries to order the individual body. He needs to still the bodily motions. This requires him to delimit the body, to sever it from the conditions that cause it to be moved. Such delimitation is both predicated upon and produces a new assumption that there is a 'natural' state of the body outside culture and history. Here Charleton's *Natural History* gropes towards the basis of a new hierarchy, one grounded on the authority of a 'natural' realm beyond the reach of human will. But before Charleton finds this new footing, the head of the grotesque body has to roll, which it does, with the allegorical correspondence of 'intestine wars' and the historical civil wars that culminated in the beheading of Charles I in 1649.

Allegories of Civil and Intestine War

The grotesque bodily canon emphasises the role of culture in the constitution of bodies. The way in which the body is put together correlates with the organisation of social, civic, and even cosmic bodies. Anatomical hierarchies correspond to the social structure and the

cosmos, emphasising the arbitrariness of any one specific conception of the body. Charleton's assumption of this correlation prompts his move into allegory:

For, this intestine War, seeing it cannot arise from one and the same thing possessed with affections mutually repugnant, and inclining us two contrary waies at once; argues a *Duumvirate* of Rulers reciprocally clashing, and contending for superiority; and such too that are as remote in their natures, as different in the modes of their subsistence. (54)

Mapped onto the topography of the human body, the English civil wars, the regicide, and the Restoration enter Charleton's *Natural History* as a riotous sexual orgy. The two 'Rulers' are inseparable and irreconcilable lovers, tumbling and cavorting in such a way that it is impossible to tell whether they are more concerned with self-propagation (with each other) or self-preservation (against each other), whether they are having their murderous pleasure or suffering in exquisite pain. As their allegorical cavorting takes over Charleton's narrative, the 'subtle body' of the 'Sensitive Soul' is quite absorbed by the 'gross' grotesque body.

In order to establish a 'natural' and therefore immutable basis of authority for the exercise of power required to subdue the passions, Charleton tries first to establish the 'natural' hierarchy of the body's parts. Starting at the brain, it moves down to the heart, then to the stomach, and then to the Sensitive Soul, which must be you-know-where, below the stomach. The genital centre of procreativity is somehow at both the top and bottom of this and all hierarchies:

The brain is beholden to the heart, both to the stomach; and reciprocally the stomach is assisted by them: all parts conspire, by contributory helps, to continue the Soul in its subsistence, as that again acts perpetually to the conversation of herself and them. (22)

In this vertiginous anatomy, subordinating relations – the brain 'beholden' to the heart – resolves in a 'conversation,' a turning together on a flattened plane.

The Rational Soul is placed above all this in 'a higher sphere of impassability, like the top of mount *Olympus* [...] looking down the while upon all tumults, commotions and disorders hapning in the inferior parts of man' (56). But it, too, tends in a downward direction. It or 'He' is king and in every way vastly superior to the Sensitive or Corporeal Soul. The pre-eminence of the Rational Soul derives first from its 'unconfined power of speculation.' It can perceive the immaterial realm, in contrast to the Sensitive Soul's corporeal limitation,

which prevents it from 'knowledge of things above the sphere of her own nature' (47–8). The Rational Soul is also the 'natural' ruler, the seat of authority in its capacity for acts of judgement. As intellect, it corrects the errors 'occasioned by the senses' of its 'hosts' (48). However, it is only from 'representations sensible' that the Rational Soul is able to make its superior judgements and to deduce its 'notions of things altogether unknown to sense' (50). These representations are, of course, generated by the body, animated by the Sensitive Soul. There is no direct access to the world, not even to one's own body, except by way of the representations of the senses, performed in the theatre of the passions.

Charleton thus discovers only the alarming mutability of his categories as he struggles in a relentlessly horizontal world to find the ground for establishing the superiority or supremacy of the one over the other. For the usurper always behaves exactly as did the sovereign. The Sensitive Soul occupies the throne as Queen Regent and may owe 'obedience to the commands and dictates of her superior' (81). But she is in fact married to the body and therefore inclined to favour its needs and desires. She cannot be counted upon to honour the abstract injunctions of her king, the Rational Soul:

[B]eing by so strict a ligue, and as it were a conjugal union affianced to the body, she is strongly inclined to prefer the conservation of that her favourite, to all other relations; and accordingly to gratify and indulge it even in those things that are prohibited by religion and reason. (81)

The imperatives and loyalties of the Sensitive Soul are a continual threat to the sovereignty of the Rational Soul. Both his superiority and vulnerability lie in his access to the immaterial world; his pre-eminence is also the basis of his tendency to be unseated as ruler of the passions. The non-material nature of the Rational Soul renders it irrelevant and superfluous in the very material passions of the body. While the Sensitive Soul always has just one thing on her mind:

[...] being much nearer allied to the body [...] she is continually courted and presented by all the Senses with variety of blandishments and tempting delights. So that charmed by those powerful enchantments of sensible objects, and intirely (sic) taken up with care of the body, and in that respect prone to pursue pleasures: she too often proves deaf to the voice of Reason advising the contrary, and refuses to be diverted from her sensual to nobler affections. (57–8)

These sensual affections are only barely sublimated to the civil realm where they take the form of the desires of the straight-laced Puritans and their parliamentarian brethren. Like all things repressed or oppressed, the Sensitive Soul always sooner or later wants to be on top:

Yea sometimes grown weary of subjection, she takes occasion to cast off her yoke of allegiance, and like a proud and insolent Rebell, aspires to unbounded license and dominion. (58)

The moment of the inversion of the hierarchy of body and soul is the moment of sexual union, appropriately cast here as an inverted rape (the female rapes the male):

[T]he forces of sensual allurements then proving too strong for all the guards of Reason, though assisted by the auxiliary troops of *Moral* precepts, and the sacred institutes of *Religion* [...] the whole unhappy man is furiously carried away to serve the brutish lusts of the insolent usurper, and augment the triumphs of libidinous carnality: which degrades him from the dignity of his nature [...] for, *Reason* once debauch'd so as to become brutal, leads to all sorts of excess; whereof beasts are seldom guilty. (57–9)

The 'libidinous carnality' so debauches this wobbly king that he falls to a position and into behaviour beneath that of animals. Now he is in the position of the usurper. But an even more astonishing transformation takes place when the mutable Rational Soul is reassembled after the rape not as male but as female. Elsewhere in Charleton's work, and even earlier in this passage, it is gendered male.¹⁰ But here, this transsexual 'Princess' has the potential to reverse her fortunes. The above passage continues:

Yet this is not always the issue of the war. Sometimes it happens that the victory falls to the right side; and the Princess overpowering the Rebell, reduces her to due submission and conformity. Nay sometimes *Reason*, after she hath been long held captive, breaks off her fetters; and remembering her native Sovereignty, grows conscious and ashamed of her former lapses: and deposes the *Sensitive* Soul with all its legions of lusts, and gloriously re-establishes herself on the throne. Yea more, at

¹⁰ Many of Charleton's sources, such as Descartes, Hobbes, Vives, and Willis, were available to him only in Latin. The word he translates as 'Rational Soul' may have been, variously, the feminine 'mensa' (mind) or 'anima' (spirit). This could account for the indeterminacy of gender in Charleton's *Natural History*.

once to secure her empire for the future, and expiate the faults of her male-administration in times past; she by bitter remorse, severe contrition, and sharp penance, punishes herself, and humbles her traitorous enemy the Flesh. (59).

The laying of blame for the usurpation on a 'male-administration,' while supporting my observation of mutable gender hierarchies, may be merely a typographical error for 'maladministration.' Even so, the changeability of identities in Charleton's inquiry – from Queen Regent to Puritan whore, from king to beast, and from male to female – indicates the essential generative principle of both the individual and the social body. Now one is on top, now the other. The only certainty in this relation is the constant motion.

Motions of the Sensitive Soul

Motion, or 'becoming,' is the unwieldy condition of the grotesque body.¹¹ It is always in the state of becoming someone or something else. It is climbing or falling, pregnant, giving birth, spawning strange lumps, or losing bits of itself in life's processes. Ironically, we see the unmistakable appearance of the genre of natural history in Charleton's account of the body's motion. Hobbes saw the passions as the source of all motivation and achievement, and grounds his theory on the assumption of individual bodies constantly in the motions of aversion or desire.¹² Although Charleton wants to account for the passions in terms of motion, and he says, following Hobbes, that he understands motion to be the body's normal state, his whole project seeks to 'quiet' the body and prevent motions of 'disquiet and perturbation' (68). His concern is to find 'the most powerfull Remedies' against the 'Excesses' of the passions ("Epistle"). For Charleton, extremes of good motions can be as destructive as those of bad. The 'Vital Flame' of the Sensitive Soul may be suffocated as easily by an excess of joy as by an excess of despair (143). Immoderate motions can dangerously disrupt the normally smooth circulation of the blood:

¹¹ Bakhtin M.M., *Rabelais and His World* 317f.

¹² Macpherson C.B., "Introduction", in *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes (London: 1968) 19.

[...] the calm and equal circulation being interrupted, is forced to undergo irregular floods and ebbs, and other violent fluctuations [...] and by their exorbitant manner of influx into the nerves of the Heart and lungs, they move them irregularly, and so contribute to render the course of the blood more unequal. (69–70)

Though his language becomes increasingly technical and removed from the world of politics and social intercourse, Charleton never entirely abandons the grotesque body. This passage goes on to describe disturbances of the circulation of the blood in meteorological terms as a ‘tempest’ which can cause the ‘discomposure of the Reasonable Soul her self’ (70). When describing the desired state of tranquillity of the passions, the body with its geographical contours and meteorological systems is placed at the centre of a pre-Copernican cosmos (69). Struggling to resist such centrifugal pressures and to remain focused on the body before him, Charleton paradoxically finds that the calm and regular motions of the body are most readily observable during sleep or in conditions of ‘indifference.’ The passions, by contrast, are produced only when the body is perturbed and moved to degrees of expansion or contraction in desire or aversion:

[T]he Sensitive Soul, when put into this state of perturbation, doth strangely vary her Postures according to the diversity of motions caused in her: and though that diversity be very great, yet that in all perturbations whatever, she is more or less amplified, so as to swell beyond her ordinary bounds; or more or less contracted within her self, so as to be less extensive or diffused, than usually she is at other times, in her state of tranquillity [...] [H]ow great soever the variety of such her Mutations may be in the vast diversity of Passions, yet they are all but several degrees, and divers modes of either her Extension, or Contraction. (72–3)

The Sensitive Soul expands towards that which it desires and constitutes as good. It shrinks from that which it would avoid and defines as evil. As in Hobbes, the values of good and evil do not inhere in things themselves but are produced by human desires and aversions, since ‘we are more or less prone to consider the greatness or meanness of an object, because we more or less love it’ (92).

This scandalous notion, which contributed to the charges of atheism against Hobbes, is the point of separation of the body from any essential connection to human value systems. In spite of himself, Charleton has difficulty making such a separation. For him, ‘Virtue’ and ‘Vice’ exist in the external world, and he is vexed that he cannot locate their point of

connection to the body. He notes that 'there seem to be much less of Convenience or fellowship betwixt Virtue and Passion, than between Passion and Vice' (99), but he cannot find any ground that might fix these good and evil twins more firmly:

[...] no reason appears, why the same Motion that serves to confirm a conception that is ill-grounded, may not serve likewise to confirm that same conception though it be well grounded (99).

What can be established with certainty is only the physiological process, quite apart from its moral orientation or implication. Charleton considers this severing of the body from its faculty of evaluation and at the same time continues to invoke the mediation of 'spirits' – in this instance, moving between the 'Imagination' and the 'solid parts' of the body:

[W]hen the Imagination conceives any thing to be embraced as good, or avoided as evil; presently by the spirits residing in the brain, and ranged as it were into order, the Appetite is formed: and then the impression being transmitted to the Heart, according as that is contracted or dilated, the blood is impelled and forced to various fluctuations, and irregular motions: and thence the Appetite being by instinct transmitted to the nerves ordained for that use, they cause motions of the solid parts respective thereunto. And this we may conjecture to be the *order of motions* excited successively in the phantasy, spirits, blood and solid parts, in every Passion of the mind of what sort soever. (71)

Once he establishes this order of motions in general, Charleton undertakes a close reading of those motions most likely to be immoderate and therefore most urgently requiring regulation. These are the motions associated with Joy (Laughter), Grief or Sorrow (Weeping), and Anger (Rage). In all three discussions, Charleton again has difficulty focusing on the bodily motions alone. He has trouble sorting out the impassioned subject from the object of its passion. As a result, his account of laughter, isolated here, is suggestively oriented towards both.

True and Fictitious Laughter

Charleton proceeds to examine the occasions or objects of laughter. The three 'requisites in a ridiculous cause considered,' or combined subjective-objective conditions that produce laughter, are novelty, infirmity, and eminency. Novelty engenders the motions of admiration and

surprise. Infirmity arises from the 'representation of some absurdity or indecency of another [...] or at the mischances and infirmities of others' (146). Eminency and its motions of triumph are produced in the laughing subject's sense of superiority to such infirmity. The motions of admiration, joy, and triumph are those of identity and expansion, of a movement upward and towards the object of admiration. Aversion moves the body in the opposite direction, producing contraction and a shrinking away from the object. Laughter is apparently the physical sensation and dilemma of the body in producing, at the same time, these opposed movements of aversion and desire. It is the body's register of the truth of the process that produces particular truths.

The 'requisite' of novelty orients laughter towards the new, unexpected meaning, and the moment of reordering the body in the world. Charleton stresses that the constituent motion of admiration generates appetite or desire for knowledge, which precedes judgement, and is therefore situated in a special relation to both the relativity and the ground of knowledge:

When the image of a *new* and *strange* object is presented to the Soul, and gives her hope of knowing somewhat that she knew not before; instantly she *admireth* it, as different from all things she hath already known; and in the same instant entertains an appetite to know it better, which is called *Curiosity* or desire of knowledge. And because this *Admiration* may, and most commonly is excited in the Soul before she understands, or considers whether the object be in itself convenient to her or not: therefore it seems to be the *first* of all passions, next after Pleasure and Pain; and to have no *Contrary* [...]. Whence it is manifest, that all natural *Philosophy*, and *Astronomy* owe themselves to this passion [...]. (89)

Earlier, Charleton was at some pains to locate particular passions in relation to the will, considering whether they precede or follow from evaluative judgements. Similarly, on presenting the admixture of admiration, aversion, and triumph that produces the motions of laughter, Charleton tries to resolve its ambivalence by examining the question of the relation of laughter to the will. He introduces the strange case of the eminent sixteenth-century humanist, Johannes Ludovicus Vives, a man who, in certain circumstances, could not stop laughing. Apparently, 'when he began to eat after long fasting, he could not forbear to break forth into a fit of loud laughter' (147). The question is how to tell whether this is 'true' or 'fictitious' laughter. Both Vives and Charleton attempt to distinguish involuntary laughter from that which proceeds from a wilful emotion. Both raise the interesting question of whether the

emotions constitute the body's true and 'natural' judgement, or whether bodies follow judgements emanating from the will, a faculty that is, by implication, located somewhere else.¹³ The story of 'Ludovicus Vives' seems to provide the language Charleton seeks to isolate the will in his own account. For Charleton, the will is based precisely on making the distinction between the true and the fictitious, or the 'artificial.' The will is predisposed to distinguish between, say, the objects and sensations of admiration and aversion, and it cannot, by definition, recognise their simultaneous occurrence in a single bodily motion.

By focusing on the will in this way, Charleton precipitates his reordering of the body. Whereas Hobbes had identified the will with the appetites, Charleton follows Descartes in seeing them as separate. He makes the will a function of reason, or the Rational Soul, and considers it to be operative on the passions; it is above them in a hierarchical ordering. This has the effect of divorcing the faculty of discrimination, or the judgement, from any particular body and any particular bodily positioning. The problem of mediation reasserts itself, however, in that the will is summoned to operate as a 'subtle body' that communicates between body and soul. Such emphasis on the will is Charleton's response to the contradiction confronting all of the Christian natural philosophers, namely, that 'Nature' both is the source of laws governing all bodies, and is lawless in giving rise to laws outside human value systems.

In its linkage of laughter, food, and death, the story of Ludovicus Vives is unmistakably of the grotesque canon.¹⁴ Vives, in recounting his experience of apparently involuntary laughter, brings these generic elements together in quoting Pliny the Younger on the ticklishness of armpits:

That the heart diaphragm is the main location of laughter can be learned from the tickling we feel under the armpits, to which the diaphragm reaches.' The same author [Pliny] claims that gladiators who were wounded under the armpits, frequently died laughing. That kind of laughter, however, is totally bodily and has nothing to do with any emotion, as the tickling under the arms and other locations of the body. I myself

¹³ Vives J.L., *The Passions of the Soul: The Third Book of 'De Anima et Vita'*, tr. C.G. Norena (Lewiston-New York: 1990) 1–6, 57–59.

¹⁴ Bakhtin M.M., *Rabelais and His World* 325.

cannot keep from laughing when I take the first bite of food after a long fast; the reason is that food expands the contracted diaphragm.¹⁵

For Vives, this involuntary laughter is 'natural' but not true. True laughter would be that which proceeds from an emotion and is therefore subject to the will. The canon of the grotesque body, in which Vives writes, specifically aligns 'true' laughter and other motions of the body with the cultural rather than the 'natural' realm, although, granted, these distinctions did not exist for him. Truth arises from or is available in social processes and relations. Cultural values determine whether or not the body will laugh.

Because of his footing in the grotesque canon, Charleton hesitates over Vives' formulation. But his medical training in anatomy and iatrochemistry, and his access to the hybrid genre of natural history, prevent him from distinguishing varieties of laughter in quite the same way. On the strict basis of the physical motions of the body, he finds no material means to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary, passionate and calculated, fictitious and true laughter. And because of his involvement in natural history, the value placed on these categories is reversed in Charleton. For Vives, 'natural' laughter is bodily. It is assigned a negative value and placed in opposition to 'true' laughter. In Charleton, 'fictitious' laughter is negative, while 'true' laughter is the sign of the purely regular and physical, and therefore positive, passion of joy:

And as for that *Laughter* which is sometimes joined with *Indignation*; it is most commonly *fictitious* or artificial, and then it depends intirely upon our *will*, as a voluntary action: but when 'tis *true* or *Natural*, it seems likewise to arise from *Joy* conceived from hence [...]. (146)

But while Charleton reverses Vives' values, he is incapable of explaining the odd example of Vives' involuntary laughter without recourse to 'cultural' as well as 'natural' causes. He finally has to say that the laughter of Vives is 'Natural, though not passionate' (147). It is natural in that

[...] in this Learned man, either the *Lungs* were more apt to be distended with blood, or the *Midriff* more easily put into the motions that produce laughter, than commonly they are in most other men. (147)

¹⁵ Vives J.L., *The Passions of the Soul* 57.

But the ‘admirable laughter of Ludovicus’ is calculated, cultural, or artificial in that ‘the nerves inservient to the motion of the Midriff [...] cause quick and short reciprocations [...] upon the grateful relish of his meat, after long abstinence, which doth always heighten the pleasure of refection’ (150). The problem is that Charleton would prefer not to have it both ways, as the genres of the grotesque canon would have it. He tries to separate out one way of talking about the body from another way, one genre from another.

The genre of natural history is most fully realised in an almost purely physiological account of laughter as Charleton pours over the case of Vives and the problem of the will. This account, however, is necessarily of no particular body, an abstraction, an account which stills the motion of laughter, and severs the body from all spheres of discourse except those of iatrochemistry, proto-physiology, and anatomy, genres that make visible ‘natural,’ ‘moderate’ laughter, the kind that does not perturb the passions or threaten the health of the entire body. It consists in a

brisk and placid motion of the heart, as if it sprung up with joy to be alleviated or eased of its burden. Wherefore that the blood may be the more speedily discharged out of the right Ventricle of the heart into the Lungs, and out of the left into the Aorta or grand Artery; the *Diaphragm*, being by abundance of Animal spirits immitted through so many nerves proceeding from the[...] *Plexus*, briskly agitated is by nimble contraction drawn upwards; and so making many vibrations, doth at once raise up the *Lungs*, and force them to expell the blood out of their vessels into the *arteria venosa*, and to explode the aire out of their spongy substance, answerable in time and quickness to the vibrations of the *Midriff*. (149–150)

The entire social context of this body has disappeared. Labyrinths of nerves and blood vessels remain as this body is severed from the cultural processes which make intelligible the allegories of its passions.

The Ends of Mediation

Sustained attention to the problem and mechanisms of mediation between incommensurable phenomena and discourses, such as we encounter in Charleton’s *Natural History*, serves at least two opposed purposes. First, the discursivisation, or putting into words, of the mediating agencies – as the ‘third thing,’ the ‘Sensitive Soul,’ ‘subtle bodies,’ the ‘spirits residing in the brain,’ the ‘intertexture of fibres’ –

effectively isolates those very elements which must be, and which then can be, excluded from the emergent canon of the 'natural' body. Charleton's work thus negatively shapes a strictly physiological language and genre. Mediation itself, and the very need for it, is in the process of being relinquished. Second, Charleton's *Natural History* suggestively displays a myriad of potential ways to conceive of mediations, such as various possible configurations of subjects and objects, bringing intriguing questions to mind: what would a science and a literature look like if genres were available which stress and exploit, rather than suppress and exclude, the 'intertexture' of the human organism to its social, historical as well as its physical context? What difference might such generic resources make? Charleton's *Natural History of the Passions* exposes many loose threads that may be taken up in exploring such alternative formulations of the body in medical modernity.

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GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE:
THE APPARITION OF MRS. VEAL, ROWE'S *FRIENDSHIP*
IN DEATH AND THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
INVISIBLE WORLD

Jennifer Frangos

At the stroke of noon on Saturday, September 8th, 1705, Mrs. Mary Bargrave, a resident of Canterbury, received a visit from her old friend Mrs. Margaret Veal, whom she hadn't seen in more than two years. Over the course of nearly two hours, the reunited friends spoke of their childhood, of a book they used to read together, and of Mrs. Veal's scrubbed silk dress. It wasn't until two days later that Mrs. Bargrave learned that Mrs. Veal had died at noon on Friday, September 7th, 24 hours before appearing at her house, and in Dover, more than 100 miles away. The story occasioned much discussion, even investigation by the Royal Society's John Flamsteed;¹ it was the subject of a pamphlet entitled *A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal*, published anonymously in 1706 that was, in 1790, attributed to Daniel Defoe.² Very soon after its publication, *A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal* was bound and sold in a volume with Charles Drelincourt's *A Christian's Defense Against the Fears of Death* (1651 in French; in English 1675), a book discussed by the apparition and Mrs. Bargrave. This

¹ In November of 1705, Stephen Grey investigated Mrs. Bargrave's story at the request of John Flamsteed; his detailed letter to Flamsteed (dated November 15, from Canterbury) is reprinted in Sherman S. (ed.), *The Longman Anthology of British Literature* vol. 1C: The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century, 2nd ed. (New York: 2003) 2376–2380.

² [Anon.], *A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal, The Next Day After her Death, To One Mrs. Bargrave, at Canterbury: The 8th of September, 1705* (London: 1706), based on information from the *English Short Title Catalogue, Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale Group, Release date 11/01/2004, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>. Recently, George Starr has challenged this traditional attribution of this pamphlet to Defoe: see Starr G., 'Why Defoe Probably Did Not Write *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal*,' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 15,3–4 (April–July 2003) 421–450. Apparently following Starr's lead, the pamphlet is not included in the 50+ volume Pickering & Chatto Works of Defoe series edited by W.R. Owens and P.N. Furbank, to be completed in 2008. My interest here, however, is less in the authorship of this particular text than in its subject matter and presentation; I therefore leave the question of its authorship to others.

combined volume went through multiple editions through the rest of the eighteenth century.³

In 1728, 23 years after the appearance of Mrs. Veal's apparition, Elizabeth Singer Rowe published *Friendship in Death, in Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living*. As its title suggests, this series of unrelated fictional letters reinforces the importance of friendship, both during one's lifetime and afterwards. In these letters, spiritual correspondents write to someone they knew in life, someone for whom their death was (or should have been) an emotional event: there is a letter from a child to his grieving mother, from a young woman to the man who seduced and abandoned her, and to a sister who mourns so strongly that she rejects the 'Decrees of Heaven.'⁴ Correspondents play upon those worldly connections as they confirm the existence of an afterlife, of a place filled with others, and the sense of relief and release that comes with dying. *Friendship in Death* stayed in print at least until 1816, with no fewer than 23 editions in that time.

The popularity of these ghost stories could be explained by what Ralph Houlbrooke characterises as the eighteenth-century desire for 'the good death,'⁵ but there seems to be something more to it than that. What is striking to me, for example, about the account of Mrs. Veal's apparition is not the measures taken to establish Mrs. Bargrave's veracity or the plausibility of the visitation, or even the advice or comfort Mrs. Veal gives her friend, but rather the content of the conversation reported between the ghost and her old friend. Mrs. Veal is no harbinger of either bad tidings or of unredressed wrongs, nor does she explicitly testify to the goodness of God and the rewards of Heaven, and in this she marks a change in tenor and tone of English ghosts – leaving us to ask, what is she *doing* in Mrs. Bargrave's parlour, and what does her story provide to its numerous contemporary readers? Emotional bonds predominate in *A True Relation*, along with a markedly secularised

³ For a comparative reading of several eighteenth-century accounts of the apparition, see Baine R.M., 'The Apparition of Mrs. Veal: A Neglected Account', *PMLA* 69,3 (1954) 523–541. Arthur H. Scouten identifies and prints an account that appeared in *The Loyal Post* on 24 December 1705; see Scouten A.H., 'An Early Printed Report on the Apparition of Mrs. Veal', *The Review of English Studies* New Series 6,23 (July 1955) 259–263.

⁴ Rowe, E.S., *Friendship in Death. In Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living* [1728], in Backscheider P. – Richetti J.J. (eds.), *Popular Fiction by Women 1660–1830* (New York: 2006) 323–334 (334).

⁵ Houlbrooke R., 'The Age of Decency: 1660–1759', in Jupp P.C. – Gittings C. (eds.), *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (New Brunswick, NJ: 2000) 174–201 (179).

message that death is nothing to fear, messages that are heightened in *Friendship in Death*. In thinking through what Mrs. Veal is doing in Mrs. Bargrave's parlour and why it matters in some larger context, my paper here will seek to contextualise the conversation between Mrs. Bargrave and Mrs. Veal by reading it in conjunction with changing discourses about death and the relationships between the dead and the living, and the new scientific discourses that altered the nature of the relationships between people and the wider world.

My basic premise is that the fascination with ghosts roughly echoes the fascination with the invisible world brought to light with popularisation of scientific technique and technology, as exemplified by the publication of Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* in 1664/5.⁶ The connections are found, as we shall see, both in resonances in the general culture, as well as in the phrase 'subtle bodies,' used to describe both scientific discoveries such as animalcules and capillaries as well as apparitions, and thus to link them as obscure objects to be observed and analysed.⁷ Furthermore, I will argue that ghosts come to reflect a growing cultural emphasis on the emotions of the living and perhaps empirical limits to the study of death; though religious imagery is not absent from the ghost stories I will consider here, what carries at least as much weight is a dual emphasis on logical explanation and intimate, emotional bonds. Secular and religious imagery and messages are held in tandem, like the competing images and messages contained within the *concordia discors* of the Augustan heroic couplet.

Ghosts and Death

Ghosts have, of course, been a staple of English narrative for centuries. According to Keith Thomas, '[i]n medieval England it was fully accepted that dead men might sometimes return to haunt the living. The Catholic Church rationalized the ancient belief in ghosts by teaching that such apparitions were the souls of those trapped in Purgatory,

⁶ The accepted publication date of Hooke's text is 1665; however, Fournier notes that it was published on the last day of 1664: see Fournier M., *The Fabric of Life: Microscopy in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore: 1996) 49.

⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists two related definitions of 'subtle' with seventeenth-century examples: 'Of immaterial things: Not easily grasped, understood, or perceived; intricate, abstruse' and 'Fine or delicate, esp. to such an extent as to elude observation or analysis.'

unable to rest until they had expiated their sins.⁸ When the Protestant Reformation did away with the idea of Purgatory, the notion that ghosts were the souls of the dead was discouraged as well, in favour of the idea that ghosts were part of the Devil's efforts to test the faith of those to whom they appeared. Ghosts, then, were not necessarily disavowed as phenomena, but rather people 'were assiduously taught not to take them at their face value.'⁹

Thomas also notes a shift in the purpose behind ghostly visits, observing that in the Middle Ages ghosts were understood as souls returning from Purgatory seeking absolution for a secret crime; after the Protestant Reformation in England, however, the ghost 'no longer wanted masses said for his soul. Instead, he wished to alter some particular relationship between living people.'¹⁰ This connection between the living and the dead who, through death, have access to knowledge or information that could be of use in the material world is a reversal of the pre-Reformation relationship, wherein it is the dead who need something from the living, namely prayers and masses to redeem their souls trapped in Purgatory. Thomas's characterisation of ghostly purpose reflects also on the Reformation focus on the here-and-now, rather than the promise of the hereafter. Under Protestant doctrine, as entrance into Heaven became less a given (or the result of a convenient deathbed confession) and more the result of actions and beliefs during a person's lifetime, uncertainties about the afterlife began to take hold, and by the Restoration period it was common enough to hear of pacts between friends that whoever should die first would make the effort to appear to the others in order to reassure them as to the existence of some sort of life after death. A pact of this sort reportedly lay at the heart of the Earl of Rochester's profligacy – according to Bishop Burnet, who famously presided over Rochester's deathbed confession, when a

⁸ Thomas K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: 1971) 587. For a survey of more recent scholarship, see Gordon B. – Marshall P., 'Introduction: placing the dead in late medieval and early modern Europe', in Gordon B. – Marshall P. (eds.), *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2000) 1–16. On death and dead more generally, see also Cressy D., *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: 1997); Houlbrooke R., *Death, Religion, and the Family in England 1480–1750* (Oxford: 1998); Houlbrooke R., 'Death, Church and Family in England between the Late Fifteenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', in Houlbrooke R. (ed.), *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement* (London: 1989); and Marshall P., *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: 2002).

⁹ Thomas K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic* 590.

¹⁰ Thomas K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic* 597.

friend who died in battle failed to return as promised, Rochester lost his faith in any kind of hereafter and it proved 'a great snare to him during the rest of his life.'¹¹

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were a period of changing attitudes toward death and its relationship to life. During this period the phenomenon of death shifted from a social register, in which the loss of an individual was perceived to impact the entire community, to a deeply personal one in which the family were the most seriously affected; in this period, for example, immediate family members replaced designated outsiders as the primary mourners in funeral rituals¹² and 'Sorrow was recognized as a natural response to the deaths of friends and loved ones.'¹³ After a period of minimal ceremony surrounding funerals and burial during the Commonwealth, the long eighteenth century saw an increase in both elaborate funerals and memorials for the dead, geared especially toward those left behind. Increasingly, tombs and other representations of the dead highlighted the loss of the family members rather than the social status of the dead;¹⁴ epitaphs and memorials likewise focused on the life lived, emphasising 'private virtue as well as, or rather than, public careers.'¹⁵ The year 1675 saw the first professional undertaker (William Boyce) setting up shop and the development of an industry to serve the bereaved, helped along by laws (somewhat controversial and often ignored) governing the sorts of cloth that bodies could be buried in (in favour of homegrown wool over imported linen).¹⁶ Between 1689 and 1714, the printing of funeral sermons reached a high point, averaging about 150 per year, and delivered texts increasingly meant to 'set forth Protestant doctrine concerning death and the afterlife and to offer consolation to the bereaved' rather than to eulogise the deceased.¹⁷ All of this points to an emphasis, at the cultural level, on the emotional reactions to death at the individual and personal levels.

¹¹ Burnet G., *Some Passages in the Life and Death of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, quoted in Thomas K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic* 593.

¹² Gittings C., 'Sacred and secular: 1558–1660', in Jupp P.C. – Gittings C. (eds.), *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (New Brunswick: 2000) 147–173.

¹³ Houlbrooke R., 'The Age of Decency' 186.

¹⁴ Gittings C., 'Sacred and secular' 166.

¹⁵ Houlbrooke R., 'The Age of Decency' 196.

¹⁶ Waller M., *1700: Scenes from London Life* (New York: 2000) 109, 112f.

¹⁷ Houlbrooke R., 'The Age of Decency' 187.

Mrs. Veal

The *True Relation* begins by mentioning that Mrs. Veal and Mrs. Bargrave grew up together and often found sympathy and consolation for their misfortunes in each other's company. We are told that Mrs. Veal frequently said to her friend, 'you are not only the Best, but the only Friend I have in the World, and no Circumstances of Life shall ever dissolve my Friendship.'¹⁸ When Mrs. Veal's ghost appears at her friend's door, she says, 'My Dear Friend, I am come to renew our old Friendship again, and to beg your Pardon for my breach of it, and if you can forgive me, you are the best of Women.'¹⁹ Upon Mrs. Bargrave's assurance that she holds no hard feelings in this respect, the apparition 'reminds her of the many Friendly Offices she did her in her former Days, and much of the Conversation they had together in the time of their Adversity.'²⁰ The apparition speaks briefly and almost perfunctorily of Heaven and of God's love and mercy, encouraging her friend to believe that her afflictions will soon be at an end: 'For I can never believe,' she says, 'that ever God will suffer you to spend all your Days in this Afflicted State. But be assured that your Afflictions will leave you, or you them, in a short time.'²¹ This is a strangely tentative reassurance, when one thinks of it ('I can never believe'), a comment that seems more obligatory than heartfelt. As their conversation turns to the books on friendship that they liked to read together, Mrs. Bargrave asks if Mrs. Veal has read Norris's *Friendship in Perfection*, offering to fetch it for her, and Mrs. Veal interjects, 'Dear Mrs. Bargrave, I shall love you forever.'²² An alternate account of the apparition's visit has Mrs. Veal asking Mrs. Bargrave 'if she would not go with her' on her journey.²³

Several other aspects of this pamphlet and of contemporary corroborations of Mrs. Bargrave's story continue the emphasis on the friendship between the two women. Toward the end of the *True Relation* is a passage where the narrator summarises the main points of the story; in it, he comments that the apparition's 'two great Errands were to comfort Mrs. Bargrave in her Affliction and to ask her Forgiveness

¹⁸ [Anon.], *A True Relation* 2.

¹⁹ [Anon.], *A True Relation* 3.

²⁰ [Anon.], *A True Relation* 3.

²¹ [Anon.], *A True Relation* 4.

²² [Anon.], *A True Relation* 4.

²³ Baine R.M., 'The Apparition of Mrs. Veal: A Neglected Account' 529.

in her Breach of Friendship, and with a Pious Discourse to encourage her.²⁴ When he questions her about the experience of talking with an apparition, Mrs. Bargrave tells him, 'I was under no manner of Fear; I received her as a Friend and parted with her as such.'²⁵ Stephen Grey's contemporary account (from November 1705), also based on interviews with Mrs. Bargrave but varying slightly from the *True Relation*, has the apparition stating that, because of their former acquaintance, 'she would find [Mrs. Bargrave] out wherever she was' and commenting that 'friendship was much better and more perfect in the other world than in this.'²⁶ Thus the terms on which Mrs. Bargrave, at least, has come to understand the appearance of Mrs. Veal's ghost – the details she remembers and the language in which she couches her later narrations of the event – revolve around intimate bonds of friendship established over a lifetime.

At the same time, however, *A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal* participates in the contemporary discourses of reason and empiricism. For one thing, the workings of the spirit world seem to be much the same as those of the world of the living in *A True Relation*; much of the realism of the story comes from the apparition acting in ways that one would expect a ghost to act: the apparition speaks of going on a journey, but wishing to visit her old friend one more time before doing so;²⁷ she behaves much the way Mrs. Veal did when alive – suffering from fits, passing her hand before her eyes, refusing to read or write because it will make her head ache; she joins her old friend for two hours of conversation, as they were wont to do; she asks Mrs. Bargrave to write a letter on her behalf, bestowing a few personal objects to various people. When Mrs. Bargrave suggests that Mrs. Veal write the letter herself when she is feeling better, the apparition replies, 'No, [...] tho' it seems impertinent to you now, but you will see the reason for it hereafter.'²⁸

For another thing, the narrator, a Justice of the Peace, claims to have first-hand knowledge – as he calls it, of an 'intimate friendship' with Mrs. Bargrave going back 15 or 16 years, such that he can vouch for

²⁴ [Anon.], *A True Relation*, 8.

²⁵ [Anon.], *A True Relation*, 8–9.

²⁶ Grey S., Letter to Flamsteed 2377.

²⁷ This trope of death as a journey dates at least to the Jacobean period; see Marshall P., *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* 309.

²⁸ [Anon.], *A True Relation* 5.

her character personally. He assures his readers that he has taken the story from her directly and that her relation of it never varies, though he has quizzed her on several of the details, especially those regarding sensory perceptions: did she feel Mrs. Veal's gown, did she hear a noise when Mrs. Veal slapped her knee, and so on. He records details with precision, such as the apparition's repeatedly drawing her hand across her eyes as Mrs. Veal did when alive, as well as conversations full of direct quotations, often lengthy ones. He cites corroborating evidence such as neighbours reporting having heard Mrs. Bargrave talking with someone outside her house at the time the apparition was supposed to have been there. Furthermore, he weighs both sides of the story, giving attention to Mrs. Bargrave's detractors but ultimately deciding in her favour, declaring at the end of the narration:

This thing has very much affected me, and I am as well satisfied as of the best grounded Matter of Fact. And why should we dispute Matter of Fact, because we cannot solve things of which we have no certain or demonstrative Notions, seems strange to me. Mrs. Bargrave's Authority and Sincerity alone would have been undoubted in any other Case.²⁹

This conclusion is interesting on two levels: The narrator's comment – 'This thing has very much affected me' – highlights the cultural emphasis on the emotional impact of death derived from relationships between the living we have been discussing; he models a sympathetic reaction to the tale of two women's friendship transcending death and posits that emotional response as spontaneous and appropriate. The second part of the sentence – 'I am as well satisfied as of the best grounded Matter of Fact' – and the sentence that follows yoke the emotional response provoked in the listener with the scientific discourses of empiricism and observation popularised by the Royal Society: the 'best grounded Matter or Fact' is the yardstick against which the narrator measures this story and ascertains its truth.³⁰ And yet, it is the unempirical – the emotional response – that serves to confirm the truth of Mrs. Bargrave's story: the proof is the feeling provoked in a listener. *A True Relation*, it seems to me, thus reflects the absorption of empiricism into the culture at large, in a way that resists the too-easy separation of secular/scien-

²⁹ [Anon.], *A True Relation* 9.

³⁰ Jo Bath and John Newton comment on the relationships between the 'nascent scientific revolution' in their study of the cultural role of late seventeenth-century ghost stories: Bath J. – Newton J., "'Sensible Proof of Spirits': Ghost Belief during the Later Seventeenth Century", *Folklore* 117 (April 2006) 1–14, see 7–9.

tific discourse and religion – it is a statement that insists both that the natural world is observable and knowable, and that the experience of living in the world is more than can simply be reduced to matters of fact. The Justice of the Peace explicitly leaves room to belief in things for which ‘we have no certain or demonstrative Notions,’ or that may not be explainable in logical ways.

Scientific Discourses, Subtle Bodies, and the Invisible World

Early science takes a great deal on faith as well, so the Justice’s pronouncements may not be so far afield as they might initially seem. The 1663 charter for the Royal Society for the Improving of Natural Knowledge notes the group’s purpose as twofold: to serve ‘the glory of God and the good of mankind.’ As the Royal Society began in earnest to explore and catalogue the natural world, science seemed to offer all sorts of potential for explaining things that did not seem possible and for identifying things previously unnoticed and in need of explanation and study. For many of the charter fellows, the project of understanding the natural world was a means of coming closer to God.³¹ John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), for example, argues that the presence of so many forms of life *lower* than humankind implies a corresponding series of beings *above* us in the System of Being as well: ‘we have reason then to be persuaded, that there are far more *Species* of Creatures above us, than there are beneath; we being in degrees of Perfection much more remote from the infinite Being of God, than we are from the lowest State of Being, and that which approaches nearest to nothing. And yet of all those distinct *Species*, we have no clear distinct *Ideas*.’³² The Justice of the Peace relating the story of the apparition of Mrs. Veal echoes Locke’s final comment here, both in its preservation of room for belief without ‘clear or demonstrative Notions,’ but also in its implicit sense that now that such a venue of inquiry has been

³¹ See, for example, Isaac Newton’s famous letter to Richard Bentley, 10 December 1692, in which he argues ‘that the motions which the planets now have could not spring from any natural cause alone but were impressed by an intelligent agent’: *The Correspondence of Isaac Newton*, ed. H.W. Turnbull, 7 vols. (Cambridge: 1959–1977) 6:152–153.

³² Locke J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1689) Book III, ch. vi, § 12.

identified, it is only a matter of time before those 'clear distinct Ideas' will be discovered.³³

In *The Preface* to *Micrographia*, Robert Hooke celebrates the promises of the new technology of 'optical glasses':

By the means of Telescopes, there is nothing so far distant but may be represented to our view; and by the help of Microscopes, there is nothing so small, as to escape our inquiry; hence there is a new visible World discovered to the understanding. By this means the Heavens are open'd, and a vast number of new Stars, and new Motions, and new Productions appear in them, to which all the ancient Astronomers were utterly Strangers. By this the Earth it self, which lyes so neer us, under our feet, shews quite a new thing to us, and in every little particle of its matter; we now behold almost as great a variety of Creatures, as we were able before to reckon up in the whole Universe it self.³⁴

In this passage, Hooke registers the shock of the dizzying shift in perspective brought about by the relatively sudden realisation that there is more to the universe than 'the ancient Astronomers' were able to perceive: telescopes show us things so far away that we cannot see them with the naked eye; microscopes show us things so close by but so small that their existence has never before been registered. The known universe is thus expanding outward, as people use telescopes to see ever farther into the skies. But at the same time, the Earth is getting smaller and more crowded, as the microscope reveals the vast array of plant and animal life 'which lyes so neer us, under our feet.' The final clause – 'in every little particle of its matter; we now behold almost as great a variety of Creatures, as we were able before to reckon up in the whole Universe it self' – exposes the immediate and exponential contributions of empirical observation to the modern world: the brief period of study that includes Hooke's experiments has taught scientists as much about the Earth under their feet as prior generations knew about the entire universe.

³³ Locke's *Essay* is quoted to the same effect, and thus brought into the popular culture and polite society, in *Spectator* No. 519: see Addison J., *Spectator* No. 519 (25 October 1712), in Morley H. (ed.), *The Spectator: A New Edition, Reproducing the Original Text Both as First Issued and as Corrected by Its Authors*, 3 vols. (London: 1891) III:322–325; rept. *The Spectator Project*, Montclair Electronic Text Archive, Montclair, NJ, <http://meta.montclair.edu/spectator/index.html>.

³⁴ Hooke R., 'The Preface', *Micrographia, Or Some Physiological Description of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses with Observations and Inquiries thereupon* (London: 1665) A8; rept. Early English Books Online, Chadwyck-Healey, 2003, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>.

Hooke continues his Preface with a meditation on the future effects of the new knowledge provided by microscopy:

It seems not improbable, but that by these helps the subtilty of the composition of Bodies, the structure of their parts, the various texture of their matter, the instruments and manner of their inward motions, and all the other possible appearances of things, may come to be more fully discovered; all which the ancient Peripateticks were content to comprehend in two general and (unless further explain'd) useless words of Matter and Form. From whence there may arise many admirable advantages, towards the increase of the Operative, and the Mechanick Knowledge, to which this Age seems so much inclined, because we may perhaps be inabled to discern all the secret workings of Nature, almost in the same manner as we do those that are the productions of Art, and are manag'd by Wheels, and Engines, and Springs, that were devised by humane Wit.³⁵

This passage imagines a future ability to understand the natural world in terms both of its composition and its operations; to the extent that objects and systems deriving from 'humane Wit' are governed by rules and laws, so too must Nature be operating under principles that can be analysed and identified through empirical observations. Again, the modern world is shown to be improving ancient knowledge, this time by expanding the duality of 'Matter and Form' into 'the Operative, and the Mechanick Knowledge,' the latter of which allows for further and deeper understanding of 'the secret workings of Nature.'

William Sherlock's *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death* (1689) employs both the language of the invisible world and the methodology of scientific investigation in describing the position of humankind:

Man, I say, who is big with such immortal Designs, full of Projects for future Ages, who can look backward and forward, and see an Eternity without Beginning, and without End: Who was made to contemplate the wonders of Nature and Providence, and to admire and adore his Maker; who is Lord of the lower world, but has Eyes to look up to Heaven, and view the Glories of it, and to pry into that invisible World which this Veil of Flesh intercepts the Sight of.³⁶

Sherlock is primarily concerned with 'Reviv[ing] the true Spirit of Christianity in the World' through extended meditations on death,

³⁵ Hooke R., *Micrographia* A8.

³⁶ Sherlock W., *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death*. By William Sherlock, The twelfth edition (London: 1703) 28; based on information from the *English Short Title Catalogue, Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale Group, Release date 11/01/2004, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>.

judgement, Heaven and Hell,³⁷ but he marshals the terms and imagery of Hooke's optical experiments in service of the assertion of God's presence, much as we have seen in Locke. Sherlock takes the analogy further, picking up on Hooke's call to supplement the limited human senses with instruments such as microscopes, and positing the human body, the 'Veil of Flesh,' as the impediment to truly seeing the natural world:

For this Veil of Flesh parts the visible and invisible World: But when we put off these Bodies, there are new and surprising Wonders [that] present themselves to our Views; when these material Spectacles are taken off, the Soul, with its own naked Eyes, sees what was invisible before: And then we are in the other World, when we can see it, and converse with it. [...] Death opens our Eyes, enlarges our Prospect, presents us with a new and more glorious World, which we can never see while we are shut up in Flesh.³⁸

The invisible world that was before made available through the use of technology like the microscope is here superimposed on the visible world, which figures no longer as a realm that a supplement to the senses can access, but is now something that the body actively interferes with and prevents the living from perceiving. Death becomes the experience that truly allows the 'new and surprising Wonders [to] present themselves to our Views' and provides fuller access to the natural world, its workings, and its teeming varieties of life.

Rowe's 'Friendship in Death'

This sense that the world is more full of living beings than we are aware is articulated in Rowe's *Friendship in Death* in a particularly dramatic way; the first letter – 'To the Earl of R—, from Mr. —, who had promised to appear to him after his death' – reflects on a well known story about a similar pact made between the Earl of Rochester and a good friend, and offers an explanation for why 'Clerimont' did not appear at the appointed time and place. The letter-writer, Clerimont, explains that, at the time, 'It was not in my Power to give you the Evidence of a future State, which you desired, and that I had rashly

³⁷ Sherlock W., *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death* 1.

³⁸ Sherlock W., *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death* 47f.

promised.³⁹ Toward the end of the letter, Clerimont returns to the unfulfilled promise and comments:

Happy Minds in this superior State are still concerned with the Welfare of Mortals and make a Thousand kind Visits to their Friends; to whom, if the Laws of the Immaterial Worlds did not forbid, it would be easy to make themselves visible, by the Splendor of their own Vehicles, and the Command they have on the Powers of Material Things and the Organs of Sight: It often seems a Miracle to us that you do not perceive us, for we are not absent from you by *Places*, but by the different Conditions of the *States* we are in.⁴⁰

If the spirits are not in a different place from the living, but are differentiated only by the 'different Conditions of the *States*' they are in, the world must be teeming with invisible beings, like animalcules in a drop of pond water. The speaker further accentuates the numbers and presence of the spirits by commenting that it seems miraculous to them that the living do not know they are there.

Friendship in Death also contains striking allusions to rules and laws governing the spirits, which suggests that the invisible world is as orderly and logical a place as the natural world. Many of the correspondents mention having to obtain permission to write their letters in the first place; several allude to restrictions being placed upon what they can divulge to the living. The example discussed above (Letter I, from Clerimont to the Earl of R—) states that the 'Laws of the Invisible World' constrain ghosts from communicating with the living most of the time, but that if they were allowed, 'the Splendor of their Vehicles [bodies], and the Command [...] on the Powers of Material Things and the Organs of Sight' would make for a spectacular and convincing sight. The fact that there are structures and rules and a permission-granting body or bodies, is clearly meant to invoke the image of a God who ordered and oversees the universe, but it also reflects the new scientific interest in explaining and understanding the organisation of the observable world, thus folding the spirit world into the realm of the observable and knowable, the 'new visible World discovered to the Understanding.'

Rowe was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, and she states in her Preface that 'The Drift of these Letters is to impress the Notion of

³⁹ Rowe E.S., *Friendship in Death* 325.

⁴⁰ Rowe E.S., *Friendship in Death* 327.

the Soul's Immortality,⁴¹ couching the tales in an explicitly Christian context. Letter III, from a child to his mother, is a particularly good example of this: the writer, Narcissus, tells his mother that 'As soon as my Spirit was released from its uneasy Confinement, I found myself an active and reasonable Being.'⁴² He describes his 'present Circumstances' in the afterlife as

So superior [...] to that of the greatest Monarch under the Sun, that all earthly Grandeur is Pageantry and Farce, compared to the real, the innate Dignity which I now possess. I am advanced to celestial Glory, and triumph in the Heights of immortal Life and Pleasure, whence Pity falls on the Kings of the Earth. [...] I am now in the Perfection of my Being, in the Elevation of Reason: Instead of a little Extent of Land, and the Propriety of so much Space to breathe in, I tread the starry Pavement, make the Circuit of the Skies, and breathe the Air of Paradise.⁴³

The interesting dimension to this passage lies in its combination of religious and secular imagery: 'celestial Glory' and 'the Perfection of my Being, the Elevation of Reason,' the 'Air of Paradise' juxtaposed with 'the starry Pavement' and 'the Circuit of the Skies.' In other words, though religious keywords figure at the appropriate moments, they are combined with words and images associated with science and technology, making this representation of Heaven (though he never names it that) strangely secular.

The emotional ties so important in the *True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal* are present here as well, in that it is the mother's distress and grief over her child's death that prompts him to write her, and he tells her, 'If you could conceive my Happiness, instead of the mournful Solemnity with which you interred me, you would have celebrated my Funeral Rites with Songs and Festivals.'⁴⁴ Though grief at the loss of a loved one was acceptable in eighteenth-century frameworks, Houlbrooke tells us, the demonstration of excessive grief was seen as detrimental to both individuals and to families; thus this child reinforces the bonds that existed between himself and his mother, but redirects her attentions to the world she must live in without him through assurances that he has gone to a better place and so she need not worry about him any more. He also reverses their previous dynamic and informs her

⁴¹ Rowe E.S., *Friendship in Death* 325.

⁴² Rowe E.S., *Friendship in Death* 327.

⁴³ Rowe E.S., *Friendship in Death* 329.

⁴⁴ Rowe E.S., *Friendship in Death* 329.

that now it is *she* who is the child because he possesses knowledge not available to her that in some sense completes the picture and makes the world (both natural and social) understandable.

Conclusion

Hooke's 'new visible World discovered to the Understanding' opened up by the technology of the microscope resonates with cultural shifts surrounding death and dying, as articulated in Sherlock's *Practical Discourse concerning Death*. Whereas the process of dying can be studied only up to the point of an individual's death (which lends a certain finality to dying that arguably wasn't there before), the process of grieving can be observed, experienced, and reported on; this, then, is the visible world after death, perhaps more so in the cultural imagination than whatever happens after one's final breath. It makes sense, then, on a certain level, that the experience of the living should come to be the focus of cultural institutions surrounding death and dying. Emotional response, in other words, takes on a new significance in discussions of death, and this feeds a change in the type of ghost story favoured by the reading public; *A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal* and *Friendship in Death* can be read as responses to that readerly demand.

Unlike Narcissus's mother, Mrs. Bargrave is not a mourner, per se – she in fact expresses little grief upon learning of her friend's death, seeming more confused than bereft at the news. This is perhaps because she has rationally satisfying and emotionally resonant evidence (from the visitation, from the conversation) of the power of friendship to hear and comfort, and the sense – articulated 20 years later in *Friendship in Death* – of its ability to transcend mortal existence. Mrs. Veal does not bring warnings of imminent doom, nor does she require much more from Mrs. Bargrave than a reaffirmation of their friendship and a few hours of conversation about their previous attachment. My answer, then, to the question of what Mrs. Veal is *doing* and why, in some larger sense, it matters goes something like this:

Mrs. Veal, as a representative of Death – as that which has died and yet remains – highlights and confers value upon that which ought to be important during life: friendship, longstanding relationships, and support during times of trouble. By showing even the dead to be concerned about the emotional well-being of the living, *A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal* and *Friendship in Death* mark a departure

from previous narratives about English ghosts. They resonate with and so would seem to be a reflexion both of the infiltration of empirical discourse into mainstream British literary culture of the early eighteenth century, and of changing attitudes and rituals surrounding death that centre on human relationships in the here and now.

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DIE GEBURT DES KUNSTWERKS
DURCH DEN GEIST DER PROPORTION.
FRANZ XAVER MESSERSCHMIDT UND
SEINE CHARAKTERKÖPFE

Axel Christoph Gampp

Ein Besuch im Atelier

Der Berliner Aufklärer Friedrich Nicolai unternahm im Jahre 1781 eine Reise durch Deutschland und die Schweiz. Seine Beobachtungen vielfältiger Art veröffentlichte er zwischen 1783 und 1796 in einem 12-bändigen Werk.¹ Der sechste Band behandelt eine „kleine Nebenreise nach Ungarn“. Seine Route führte ihn dabei über Pressburg, wo es seit einiger Zeit eine besondere Kuriosität zu bestaunen gab: den Künstler Franz Xaver Messerschmidt.² Dieser Bildhauer hatte nach einer gescheiterten Karriere in Wien hier Zuflucht gesucht.³ Sein exzentrisches Wesen hat auf Friedrich Nicolai seine Wirkung nicht verfehlt:

Der merkwürdigste Künstler war ganz unstreitig der nachher, im Auguste 1783, im 51ten Jahre seines Alters verstorbene Bildhauer Franz Xaver Messerschmidt aus Wiesensteig in Schwaben unweit Dillingen gebürtig. Dieser Mann ist als Künstler und als Mensch gleich merkwürdig. Er war ein Mann von ungemeiner Stärke des Geistes und des Leibes. In seiner Kunst ein außerordentliches Genie; im gemeinen Leben ein wenig zur Sonderbarkeit geneigt, welches hauptsächlich aus seiner Liebe zur Unabhängigkeit entstand. Er wollte wenige Bedürfnisse haben, liebte nichts außer seiner Kunst, und hatte in derselben alles sich selbst zu danken. Er besaß eine sehr lebhaftige Imagination, und eine sehr leichte Hand (*faire*), mit der er alles sehr behende ausführte, was er dachte. So studierte er bloß die Natur, fast ohne Anweisungen [...].⁴

¹ Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise durch Deutschland und die Schweiz im Jahre 1781. Nebst Bemerkungen über Gelehrsamkeit, Industrie, Religion und Sitten* (Berlin-Stettin: 1783–85).

² Friedel J., *Briefe aus Wien verschiedenen Inhalts an einen Freund in Berlin* (Leipzig-Berlin: 1784²); 47. Brief 459: „In Preßburg zu seyn, und den berühmten Bildhauer Messerschmidt nicht zu besuchen, würde einem Kunstliebhaber zur Schande gereichen.“

³ Zur Karriere Messerschmidts in Wien siehe Pötzl-Malikova M., *Franz Xaver Messerschmidt* (Wien: 1982) 17–49.

⁴ Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* VI 401–420 (401f.).

Es folgen genaue Angaben zur Karriere Messerschmidts, deren Scheitern Nicolai mit dem unabhängigen Geiste Messerschmidts erklärt, der sich auf keine Unterwürfigkeit verstanden hatte. Deswegen habe er in Wien alles verkauft und zuletzt sich nach Pressburg in die Vorstadt Zuckermendl zurückgezogen, wo er in sehr bescheidenen Verhältnissen von seiner Arbeit lebe. Nicolai fährt fort:

Ich fand ihn in diesem einsamen Häuschen, stark an Leibeskräften und bey heiterm Gemüthe. Er hatte etwas sehr freymüthiges und ungezwungenes in seinem Wesen, und wir wurden bald ziemlich vertraut, besonders da ich eine Empfehlung von einem Künstler brachte, den er in Rom gut gekannt hatte. Sein ganzes Hausgeräth bestand aus einem Bette, einer Flöte, einer Tabackspfeife, einem Wasserkruge, und einem alten italiänischen Buche von den Verhältnissen des menschlichen Körpers. Dies war alles, was er von den Sachen, die er ehemals besaß, hatte behalten wollen. Außerdem hing am Fenster auf einem halben Bogen die Zeichnung einer ägyptischen Statue ohne Arme, die er nie ohne Bewunderung und Ehrfurcht ansah.⁵

Nun bricht aus Nicolai der Aufklärer hervor, denn er schildert Messerschmidt als einen Mann, der ganz für die Kunst lebe und dabei in höchstem Masse unverbildet sei, weswegen jeder Anstoß sogleich auf fruchtbaren Grund falle. Bedauerlicherweise trübten jedoch die falschen Dinge seinen Intellekt:

Er gerieth in Wien unter eine Gesellschaft von Leuten, die sich geheimer Kenntnisse, des Umgangs mit den unsichtbaren Geistern, und der Herrschaft über die Kräfte der Natur rühmen. Diese Art von Leuten ist in ganz Europa und besonders in Deutschland sehr zahlreich; sie verkrüppeln den Verstand unsäglich vieler Menschen, und haben auf dieselben einen Einfluss, welcher dem Willen der unbekannten, durch welche die ganze Maschine regiert wird, nur allzugemäß ist. An einer Menge von eingeschränkten Köpfen, die sich unter ihnen befinden, ist nicht viel zu verderben, und es wird durch Pflege natürlicher Dummheit nichts anders als künstliche Stupidität hervorgehoben. So entsteht von natürlichen Dummköpfen, durch geheime Weisheit noch dummer gemacht, nichts als geheimes dummes Geschwätz, und höchst dumme schwärmerische Bücher, wie etwa: Die sieben heiligen Grundsäulen der Zeit und Ewigkeit; Mikrokosmische Vorspiele des neuen Himmels und der neuen Erde, und wie eine neue vom Himmel gesegnete Erde quintessentialisch herauszubringen; Berichte von sichtbaren Glut- und Flammenfeuer der uralten Weisen; und andere Bücher dieser Art, welche denn nichts als dumm sind, und bloss noch wegen der allgemeinen gehei-

⁵ Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* VI 405.

men Verkrüppelung des Verstandes, die von vielen sehr neuen uralten Weisen jetzt so fleissig betrieben wird, noch etwas dummere Leser finden als ihre Verfasser sind.⁶

Messerschmidt betont nun Nicolai gegenüber, er könne auch Geister sehen. Das sei die Belohnung dafür, dass er seit seiner ersten Jugend sehr keusch gelebt habe (wobei Nicolai als Fußnote anmerkt, es werde von Schwärmern immer vorgegaukelt, dass es einer großen Reinheit bedürfe, um Umgang mit Geistern zu erhalten). Von derartigen – um es modern auszudrücken – Sublimierungstendenzen hält Nicolai freilich gar nichts; er sieht in ihnen einzig die Quelle für Messerschmidts getrübbten Geisteszustand.⁷ Nicolai lässt es sich aber nicht nehmen, der Sache auf den Grund zu gehen und bei Messerschmidt nachzufragen:

Er drückte sich zwar etwas zurückhaltend und nicht ganz deutlich aus, wie er denn auch von dem was er dachte, meistens sehr undeutliche Begriffe haben mochte. Indessen brachte ich ohngefähr folgendes heraus. Daß es Geister wären, die ihn besonders des Nachts so sehr schreckten und plagten, setzte er als ein unumstößliches Axiom voraus; und den würde er für seinen Feind gehalten haben, der es in seiner Gegenwart im geringsten hätte bezweifeln wollen. Nun setzte er hinzu: Er habe lange nicht begreifen können, wie es zugehe, dass er, der beständig so keusch gelebt, von den Geistern so viel Peinigung hätte erdulden müssen, da sie doch, der (schwärmerischen) Theorie zufolge, eben deswegen einen sehr angenehmen Umgang mit ihm hätten pflegen sollen. Mit einemmal aber sey es ihm eingefallen, und nun habe er der Sache nachgedacht, und das ganze System in aller Vollkommenheit erfunden, wie er, und schlechterdings jedermann, Herr über die Geister werden könnte. Der gute Mann kam auf den sehr wahren Satz: daß alle Dinge in der Welt ihre bestimmten Verhältnisse haben und daß alle Wirkungen ihren Ursachen entsprechen. Er trug ihn nur etwas unbestimmt und schielend etwa folgendermaßen vor: Es werde alles in der Welt durch die Proportionen regiert, und wer diejenigen Proportionen an sich erwecke, welche der Proportion des andern entsprächen oder ihr überlegen wären, müsse Wirkungen hervorbringen, welche der Wirkung des andern entsprechen, oder ihr überlegen seyn müßten. Aus diesem halbverstandenen Satze, vermischt mit seinen thörichten Ideen von Geistern und mit seinen Kunstkenntnissen, brachte er

⁶ Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* VI 406f.

⁷ Hier schwingt eine humoralmedizinische Auslegung mit; Messerschmidt wird von Nicolai ganz offenkundig als Sanguiniker eingeschätzt. Dessen Enthaltbarkeit bringe nun das Blut zum Stocken (Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* VI 408), was letztlich für die Verstandestrübung ursächlich sei. Zur Sublimierungstheorie siehe Krapf M., „Er nannte sie ‚Schnabelköpfe‘. Der Kampf gegen den Geist der Proportion“, in: Ausstellungskatalog *Franz Xaver Messerschmidt 1736–1783*, Wien, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere (Wien: 2002) 87–96 (95f.).

ein scharfsinnig scheinendes System voll Unsinn mit Methode verknüpft zu Stande, welches er nach Art aller Leute, bey denen die Einbildungskraft mit dem Verstande davon läuft, für untrüglich hielt. Man weiß, wie viel Aufhebens die Schwärmer von mancherley Art aus den Naturkenntnissen machen, welche der sogenannte ägyptische Hermes (der aber leider! nie in der Welt existirt hat) besessen haben soll. Also kehrte auch M. seine Augen nach Aegypten; und, da er ein Künstler war, so ließ er sich träumen, das rechte Geheimniß der Verhältnisse läge eigentlich in den Verhältnissen der Glieder der ägyptischen Statuen, besonders in der Zeichnung, die er an seinem Fenster aufgehängt hatte, und die vermuthlich das Resultat der Messungen verschiedener Theile von verschiedenen Statuen war. Er wählte, die Verhältnisse die sich in dieser Zeichnung fanden, wären die Norm der Verhältnisse die sich überhaupt an dem menschlichen menschlichen Körper finden. Er bildete sich gleichfalls ein: das nämliche Verhältniß was sich am Haupte eines Menschen finde, sey auch über den ganzen Körper einzeln ausgebreitet. Dieß war nun freilich halb wahr und halb falsch [...]. Verhältniß in allen Theilen eines jeden gegebenen menschlichen Körpers ist allerdings gewiß da, so gewiß als Ursache und Wirkung immer im Verhältniß steht. Hierauf beruhet die menschliche Physiognomik eines jeden wirklich vorhandenen menschlichen Körpers. Eben so ist ein gewisses allgemeines Verhältniß des menschlichen Körpers überhaupt anzunehmen. Hierauf beruhen alle bildende Künste, und das Ideal der Schönheit und der Zeichnung. Aber sehr ungereimt ist es, zu wähnen, dass man dieses Verhältniß, welches unter so mannichfaltigen Kollisionen sich so sehr verbirgt, mit leichter Mühe erkennen könne. Wenn man hier nicht eine geprüfte Erfahrung mit einer wohlüberdachten Theorie verknüpft, so macht man die ungereimtesten Trugschlüsse. M. war in diesem Falle. Wenn er in seinem Unterleibe oder an seinen Schenkeln Schmerzen empfand (wie dieß jedem Menschen, besonders dem der eine sitzende Lebensart führt, sehr leicht geschehen kann); so bildete er sich ein, dieß käme daher, daß er an einem marmornen oder bleynen Bilde gerade an einer Stelle des Gesichtes arbeitete, welches mit einer gewissen Stelle der untern Theile des Körpers analog wäre. Er bildete sich ein, Bemerkungen über diese Verhältnisse gemacht zu haben, und zog aus falschen Erfahrungen falsche Schlüsse. Er dichtete sich, weil seine Phantasie mit Geistern angefüllt war, einen besondern Geist der Proportion. Weil ihm seine Eitelkeit einbildete, er habe über die Proportionen und deren Wirkungen ganz unerhörte neue Entdeckungen gemacht, und weil er mitten unter diesen Entdeckungen (vermuthlich wegen vielen anhaltenden Sitzens) im Unterleibe Schmerzen fühlte; so ließ er sich träumen, der Geist der Proportion sey neidisch auf ihn, daß er der Vollkommenheit der Kenntniß der Proportionen so nahe käme, und verursache ihm daher diese Schmerzen. Da er von einem festen Charakter war, so faßte er Muth, um diesen vermeindlich boshaften Geist zu überwinden. Er ging darauf aus, in die Tiefe der Verhältnisse immer fester einzudringen,

damit er endlich über den Geist Macht bekomme, und nicht mehr der Geist über ihn. Er ging in dieser unsinnigen Theorie endlich praktisch so weit, daß er sich einbildete, wenn er sich an verschiedenen Theilen des Körpers, besonders an die rechte Seite unter die Rippen griffe, und damit eine Grimasse des Gesichtes verbände, welche mit dem Kneipen des Rippenfleisches das jedesmalige erforderliche ägyptische Verhältniß habe, so sey die höchste Vollkommenheit in dieser Sache erreicht.⁸

Messerschmidt hat nicht nur eine enge Beziehung zu dieser Art von Geistern, sondern auch zur Natur an sich und hier besonders zu den Tieren, denen er eine höhere Erkenntnisfähigkeit überirdischer Kräfte zuschreibt:

Weil sein Gehirn voll seltsamen Ideen von Geistern war, weil er, wie viele Leute von schwacher Beurtheilungskraft, jede unbekannte Wirkung durch die Wirkung eines Geistes (*causa occulta*) erklären zu müssen vermeinte; so bildete er sich ein, die Thiere könnten besser als die Menschen die Geister erkennen, und wollte dieß, Gott weiß durch welchen seltsamen Sprung der Ideen dadurch erklären, daß die Thiere keine Lippen zeigten.⁹

Deswegen bemühe sich Messerschmidt auch, in seinen Portraitbüsten keine Lippen zu zeigen, sondern die Lippen einzuziehen. Des Weiteren beschreibt Nicolai nun die Entstehung der sogenannten Charakterköpfe. In Wahrheit handelt es sich um Selbstportraits des Künstlers, die diesen in immer anderer Grimassierung wiedergeben [Abb. 1]. Sie sind – entgegen Nicolais eigener Auffassung – kein Beispiel der Physiognomik, weil sie nicht verschiedene Charaktere illustrierten, sondern ein Beispiel der Pathognomik, indem sie die verschiedenen Leidenschaften am immer gleichen Gesicht zur Schau stellen. Dieser Unterschied und die wahre Absicht von Messerschmidts Werk sind aber sehr rasch nach seinem Tode verkannt worden und in Vergessenheit geraten. Stattdessen erhielten die Charakterköpfe Beinamen wie „Der Misanthrop“ oder gar „Der unfähige Fagottist“ und damit jenen narrativen Zuwachs, der ihnen ursprünglich nicht eigen war.¹⁰

⁸ Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* VI 408–13.

⁹ Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* VI 415.

¹⁰ Zum Problem siehe Gamp A.C., „Als Kunstwerke wahre Meisterwerke“. Die Selbstportraits des Franz Xaver Messerschmidt als Ausdruck einer aufgeklärt-bürgerlichen Ästhetik“, in: Griener P. – Schneemann P.J. (Hrsg.), *Images de l'artiste – Künstlerbilder* (Bern-Berlin-Frankfurt a.M.: 1999) 19–34.

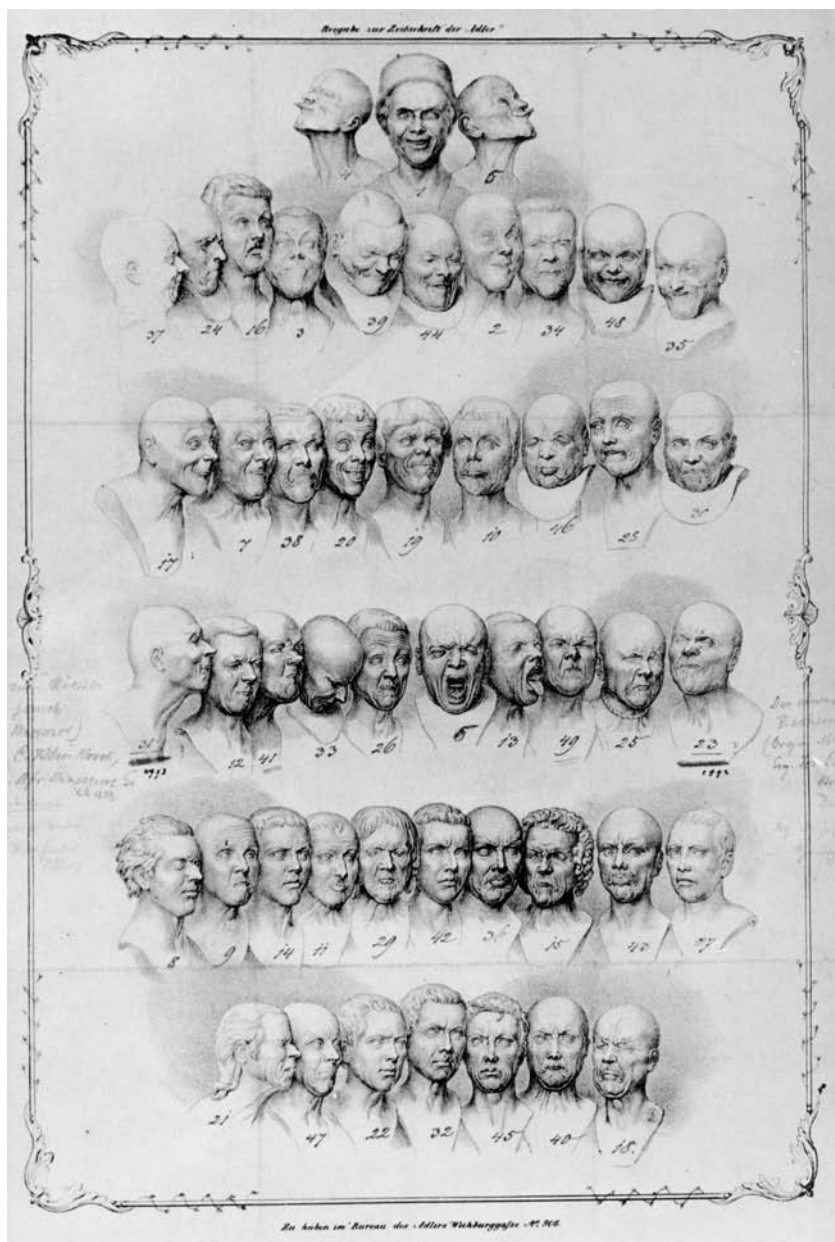


Abb. 1. Matthias Rudolph Thoma (1792–1869), *Messerschmidts Charakterköpfe*, Lithographie, 48.5 × 31.5 cm. Beigabe zur Zeitschrift „Der Adler“ (Wien: 1839).
Aus: Ausstellungskatalog *F.X. Messerschmidt* (Wien: 2002) 281.

*Messerschmidts Vorstellung der Geister*¹¹

Geht man Nicolais Beschreibung nochmals im Detail durch, so lassen sich folgende Elemente der Messerschmidtschen Vorstellung ausmachen:

- a) Messerschmidt glaubt an ein Proportionssystem.
- b) Dieses Proportionssystem ist arkaner Natur.
- c) Es enthüllt sich nur Eingeweihten.
- d) Voraussetzung dafür ist Keuschheit.
- e) Das Geheimnis wird durch die ägyptische Statue mitgeteilt.
- f) Zuviel Erkenntnis über das arkane System der Proportion macht den Geist der Proportion eifersüchtig, der deswegen den Künstler quält.

Unter den Hilfsmitteln, um zur Erkenntnis zu gelangen, werden von Nicolai erwähnt:

- a) Ein altes italienisches Buch von den Verhältnissen des menschlichen Körpers: Dabei könnte es sich um eine italienische Ausgabe von Andreas Vesalius handeln oder ganz schlicht um eine Ausgabe von Giovanni Belloris Künstlerviten mit den angefügten Vermessungen antiker Statuen durch Poussin.¹²
- b) Eine Zeichnung einer ägyptischen Statue, die so möglicherweise gar nicht existiert hat; Nicolai hielt dies für das Resultat verschiedener Messungen an verschiedenen Statuen. Die auf ihr offenbar eingetragenen Masse und Proportionen hielt Nicolai allerdings für Messungen an verschiedenen Statuen.¹³
- c) Eine Reihe von Publikationen, die Nicolai nennt. Es sind dies:
 - Adam Michael Birkholz (1746–1818), *Die sieben heiligen Grundsäulen der Ewigkeit und der Zeit* (Leipzig: 1783).

¹¹ Messerschmidts Vorstellung der Geister war die Grundlage einer lange anhaltenden Pathologisierung des Künstlers. An ihrem Anfang stand Kris E., „Die Charakterköpfe des Franz Xaver Messerschmidt – Versuch einer historischen und psychologischen Deutung“, in: *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlung in Wien* N.F. IV (1932) 168–228.

¹² In der Tat hat Franz von Scheyb in seinem Traktat *Köremons Natur und Kunst in Gemälden* (Leipzig-Wien 1770) 115, auf genau diesen Stich nach Poussin hingewiesen.

¹³ Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* VI, 411. Es war nicht möglich, diese Zeichnung zu identifizieren. Michael Krapf hat einen Stich von Jacob Schmutzer ausmachen können (Graphische Sammlung Albertina), der in einer merkwürdigen Synthese den griechischen Hermes und den ägyptischen Thot mit einem Ibis verbindet (Krapf M., „Schnabelköpfe“, 87–96 (94).

- Johann Conrad Dippel (1673–1734), *Microcosmische Vorspiele des neuen Himmels und der Erde: wie dem Menschen, als dem Bilde Gottes, von Gott zugelassen [...]. Von einem Liebhaber göttlicher und natürlicher Geheimnisse* (Amsterdam [eigentlich Berlin]: 1733).¹⁴
- Ein unbekanntes Werk mit dem Titel: *Bericht vom sichtbaren Gluten- und Flammenfeuer der uralten Weisen*.

Freilich ist nicht gesichert, ob Messerschmidt auch nur eines der von Nicolai erwähnten Werke gekannt oder gar selbst gelesen hat. Nicolai stellt den Bezug zu Messerschmidt nicht unmittelbar her. Dass ihm aber die drei Titel in den Sinn kommen, lässt darauf schließen, dass sie entweder weit verbreitet waren oder aber von Nicolai mit Messerschmidts Auffassung in einem inneren Zusammenhang gesehen werden.

*Bemerkungen zur allgemeinen Auffassung über das Wirken der Geister
im späten 18. Jahrhundert*

Wie Nicolai selbst richtig bemerkt, hat der Glaube an das Wirken von Geistern in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts einen beträchtlichen Aufschwung genommen. Freilich bezieht sich dieses vornehmlich auf die Erscheinung von Geistern.¹⁵ Jedoch kann nicht genug betont werden,

¹⁴ Von Dippels Werk gab es eine weitere Ausgabe (Amsterdam [Berlin]: 1744) und schließlich eine dritte (Frankfurt-Leipzig: 1784) mit dem leicht geänderten Titel *Microcosmische Vorspiele des neuen Himmels und der neuen Erde: wie Gott dem Menschen zugefallen aus der alten verfluchten Erde eine neue vom Himmel gesegnete Erde microcosmisch und quintessentialisch herauszubringen. Der Welt vor Augen gelegt von einem Liebhaber göttlicher und natürlicher Geheimnisse*. Messerschmidt müsste – jedenfalls zum Zeitpunkt von Nicolais Besuch 1781 – eine der früheren beiden Ausgaben gekannt haben.

¹⁵ In eindrucklicher Weise zusammengestellt wurde die Literatur des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts in Grässe J.G.T., *Bibliotheca magica et pneumatica oder wissenschaftlich geordnete Bibliographie der wichtigsten in das Gebiet des Zauber-, Wunder-, Geister- und sonstigen Aberglaubens vorzüglich älterer Zeit einschlagenden Werke* (Leipzig: 1843 [Nachdruck Hildesheim: 1960]), besonders 81–96: ‚Von den Geistern und Erscheinungen derselben‘. Unter den mir zugänglichen Traktaten finden sich etwa vom Niederländer Balthasar Bekker, *Die Bezauberte Welt: /, oder /, Eine gründliche Untersuchung / des Allgemeinen Aberglaubens / Betreffend / die Arth und das Vermögen / Gewalt und Wirkung / Des Satans und der bösen Geister / über den Menschen / Und was diese durch derselben Krafft und Gemeinschaft thun: / So aus Natürlicher Vernunft und H. Schrift in 4 Büchern zu beweisen sich unternommen hat / Balthasar Bekker, S. Theol. Doctor / und Prediger zu Amsterdam [...]. Aus dem Holländischen nach der letzten vom Authore vermehrten Edition [...]* (Amsterdam: 1693); vom Engländer Richard Baxter, *Die Gewissheit der Geister, gründlich dargethan durch unlaugbare Historien von Erscheinungen, Würckungen, Zaubereyen, Stimmen etc. Zum Beweis der Unsterblichkeit der Seele, der Bosheit und Elends der Teufel und Verdammten, und der Seeligkeit der Gerechten [...]* Ehemals in Englischer Sprache geschrieben von dem Fürtreflichen

dass es sich dabei in der Regel um Beschreibungen handelt, denen zufolge Verstorbene, Figuren aus dem Jenseits, ins Diesseits zurückkehren.¹⁶ Hier wäre vielleicht eher der Begriff Gespenster angemessen.¹⁷ Damit hat aber die Geisterauffassung Messerschmidts nichts gemein.

Messerschmidts Auffassung lässt sich vielmehr mit einem der gängigen Nachschlagewerke des 18. Jahrhunderts verstehen, nämlich mit Johann Heinrich Zedlers *Großem Vollständigem Universal-Lexikon*. Dort findet sich *sub voce* „Geist“ eine für uns wesentliche Aufgliederung.¹⁸ Zedler bemerkt, alle Geister seien von Gott erschaffen und entweder in Körper eingeschlossen oder nicht. Sofern sie in Körper eingeschlossen sind, haben sie entweder die Kraft zu denken oder eben nicht. Können sie denken, so handelt es sich um *animalia* (wozu nicht nur die Tiere, sondern auch die Menschen zählen), haben sie keinerlei Denkfähigkeit, so sind es belebte Substanzen (*substantia*). Das Denken der Tiere unterscheidet sich von jenem der Menschen insofern, als jene nur dem Objekt nach denken können, dieser aber darüber hinaus noch ein individuelles, von den Objekten getrenntes Denken hat. Dadurch wird er nicht bloß von den Objekten dominiert, wie die Tiere, sondern er kann gleichsam aus höherer Warte auf sie herabschauen und von ihnen eine Idee entwickeln. Von diesen Ideen gibt es partikulare, d.h. vom einzelnen individuell entwickelte, und generelle. Die partikulare Idee ist Ausdruck des individuellen Ingeniums, die generelle Idee Ausdruck des allgemeinen Iudicium.

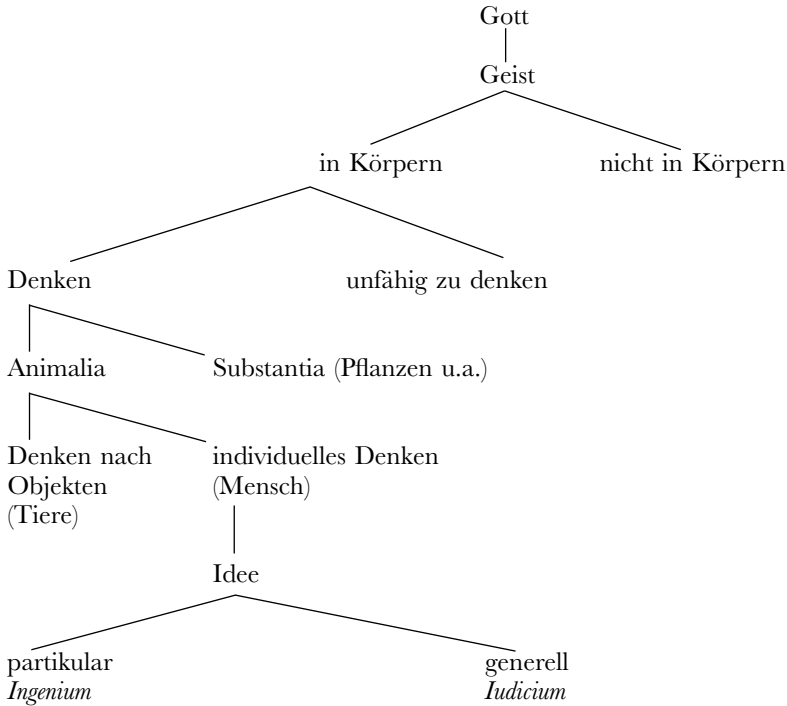
Richard Baxter, *Nunmehr aber ins Teutsche übersetzt* (Nürnberg: 1731); Semler J. S., *Abfertigung der neuen Geister und alten Irrtümer [...]* (Halle: 1760). Wie sehr das Gedankengut noch am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts präsent war, belegt Dedekind G.E.W., *Ueber Geisternähe und Geisterwirkung oder über die Wahrscheinlichkeit, daß die Geister der Verstorbenen den Lebenden sowohl nahe seyn, als auch auf sie wirken können* (Hannover: 1793); ders., *Ist's auch wahrscheinlich, daß die Geister der Verstorbenen den Lebenden nahe seyn und auf sie wirken können?* (Weissenfels: 1795). Zur Diskussion im 18. Jahrhundert: Stadler U., „Gespenster und Gespenster-Diskurs im 18. Jahrhundert“, in: Bassler M. – Gruber B. – Wagner-Egelhaaf M. (Hrsg.), *Gespenster. Erscheinungen, Medien, Theorien* (Würzburg: 2005) 127–139.

¹⁶ Die Rückkehr Verstorbener ist ein gängiges literarisches Motiv im deutschen Barocktheater; siehe Treppmann E., *Besuche aus dem Jenseits. Geistererscheinungen auf dem deutschen Theater im Barock* (Konstanz: 1999). In den gleichen Kontext zu setzen ist die Vorstellung einer zeitlosen Gemeinschaft der großen Geister, wie sie etwa von Karl Otto Brogsitter thematisiert wird: *Das Hohe Geistergespräch: Studien zur Geschichte der humanistischen Vorstellung von einer zeitlosen Gemeinschaft der großen Geister* (Bonn: 1957). Im 18. Jahrhundert blühte auch das Totengespräch: Anonym, *Gespräch zwischen Socrates, dem Ober=Aufseher in dem Reiche der Geister, und dem letzt=verstorbenen Röm. Kayser Carolus VI.* (Frankfurt: 1742).

¹⁷ Vgl. dazu etwa: Bassler M. – Gruber B. – Wagner-Egelhaaf M., *Gespenster*.

¹⁸ Zedler J.H., *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexikon X* (Halle-Leipzig: 1731 [Nachdruck Graz: 1961]) Sp. 659–662, s.v. „Geist“.

Die Vorstellung lässt sich schematisch folgendermaßen darstellen:



Das Schema ist deswegen aufschlussreich, weil es auf der letzten Stufe in zwei Begriffen endet, die auch für jede Theorie der Schönen Künste von Bedeutung sind: Ingenium und Iudicium. Messerschmidts Geist der Proportion passt nur bedingt in dieses Modell, als er ja emaniert ist, d.h. als eigene *ens* auftritt. Gleichwohl ist der Messerschmidtsche Geist im Prinzip eine allegorisierte Idee, er verkörpert gleichermaßen die Proportion *per se*. Insofern entspricht er sehr wohl der Idee. Fraglich wäre, ob diese Allegorie der Proportion in Form des Geistes ein partikulares oder ein generelles Urteil darstellt, mithin: ob sie dem Ingenium oder dem Iudicium zuzuschlagen sei. Messerschmidt würde den Sachverhalt als ein Resultat des Iudicium ansehen, Nicolai als einen Ausfluss des Ingeniums. Genau hier liegt auch die Schwierigkeit: Messerschmidt macht einen objektiven Bestand geltend, Nicolai wertet ihn als Ausfluss einer verschrobenen Künstlerpersönlichkeit, mit der der Begriff Ingenium, Genie, sehr leicht zu verbinden ist.

Messerschmidts Position erhält allerdings Unterstützung durch den Umstand, dass in ihr ältere Vorstellungen des Geistes mitschwingen, die

ihrerseits theologischer Natur sind. Insbesondere wäre hier zu verweisen auf entsprechende Überlegungen aus dem Hoch- und Spätmittelalter, wo unterschieden wird zwischen guten und bösen Geistern.¹⁹ Dabei ist nicht nachzuweisen, wie Messerschmidt zu seiner Vorstellung gelangt ist. Die nachfolgenden Erläuterungen dienen vielmehr dazu, das, was Messerschmidt ausdrückt, in jenen Kontext zu stellen, aus dem seine Bemerkungen zweifelsfrei erwachsen sind. Nicht festzustellen ist einzig, ob sie unmittelbar oder mittelbar, d.h. durch eine vielfach korruptierte Rezeption, daraus hervorgegangen sind.²⁰

Das Grundproblem besteht darin, die Wirkung der guten Geister phänomenologisch zu erfassen und von jener der bösen Geister abzugrenzen. Eine solche Auffassung muss auch Messerschmidt zugrunde liegen. Denn letztlich auf das Bibelwort Matthäus 7,20 geht die Erkenntnis zurück, dass sich wahre und falsche Propheten an ihren Früchten erkennen lassen. Das Böse ist dabei ein „Werk des Fleisches“. Indem Messerschmidt sich selbst kasteit und zur Keuschheit zwingt, will er ganz offenkundig sicherstellen, dass sein Werk eben nicht „des Fleisches“ sei, somit also auch keine falsche Prophetie enthält. Weil er aber trotz der „richtigen“ Erkenntnis gepeinigt wird, muss die Peinigung anders erklärt werden, nämlich als Einfluss böser Geister.

Interessanterweise geht auch die Art der von Messerschmidt erduldeten Anfechtungen auf die mittelalterliche Scholastik zurück. Denn Bernhard von Clairvaux unterscheidet zwischen a) Anfechtungen, die von Gott als Prüfung gesandt werden, b) Anfechtungen, die durch das Böse, insbesondere durch den Teufel selbst oder durch Dämonen entstehen, c) Anfechtungen, die aus der Begierlichkeit (*concupiscentia*) oder d) aus der leiblichen Begrenztheit (*necessitas corporis*) hervorgehen.²¹ Da Messerschmidt von jenen Geistern spricht, die ihn vornehmlich nachts plagen, würde er wahrscheinlich von einer Einwirkung durch Dämonen ausgehen wollen. Sie treten auf den Plan, gerade weil er der Eröffnung einer göttlichen Erkenntnis schon so nahe ist. Weil er keusch seinen Weg geht, ist die ihm zuteil werdende Erkenntnis guter, göttlicher Art. Sie wird aber durch die Dämonen angefochten. Es ist jedoch – immer

¹⁹ Siehe etwa Hohmann T., *Heinrichs von Langenstein „Unterscheidung der Geister“* (München: 1977); Warnock R.G. – Zumkeller A., *Der Traktat Heinrich von Friemar über die Unterscheidung der Geister* (Würzburg: 1977); Benke C., *Unterscheidung der Geister bei Bernhard von Clairvaux* (Würzburg: 1991).

²⁰ Nur am Rande sei darauf hingewiesen, dass in Dippels Werk mehrfach auf Bernhardus verwiesen wird, was doch wohl als Verweis auf Bernhard von Clairvaux zu werten ist (etwa auf den Seiten 118 und 120).

²¹ Benke C., *Unterscheidung der Geister bei Bernhard von Clairvaux* 122f.

noch nach der Theologie des Bernhard von Clairvaux – göttlichem Wirken zu verdanken, dass es überhaupt zur Anfechtung kommt, denn die Anfechtung dient dem geistigen Wachstum (*incrementum*).²² Bei Messerschmidt ist das überraschend konkret: Durch die Anfechtung wird er zur Reflexion gezwungen und erkennt in dieser Prüfung erst, dass seine Gedanken im Prinzip keine Äußerung der menschlichen, sondern vielmehr eine der göttlichen Natur sind.²³ In diesem Punkte – und damit kommen wir auf Zedlers Modell zurück – setzt die Kraft der Vernunft ein (*vis rationalis* nach Bernhard von Clairvaux), die zum richtigen Unterscheiden (*discernere*) führt. Das Unterscheiden ist dem Bereich der Erkenntnistheorie zugeordnet, denn die Vernunft gelangt nun zu einem Urteil (*iudicium*).²⁴

Durch sein Iudicium kann der Mensch beurteilen, ob er sich auf dem rechten Weg befindet. Freilich kommt bei Messerschmidt auch das Ingenium zum Tragen. Denn wiederum nach bernhardinischer Theologie äußert sich der innere Reichtum im äußeren Werk, und zwar bis hin zur Physiognomik. Dem erleuchteten Menschen ist ein froher Gesichtsausdruck geschenkt.²⁵ Mag dieses Theorem auch nicht unmittelbar auf den Fall Messerschmidt übertragbar sein, so muss es doch interessieren, dass ein direkter Zusammenhang zwischen Messerschmidts innerer Erkenntnis und seiner äußeren Darstellung besteht. Für die sogenannten Charakterköpfe ist dieser Zusammenhang eminent. An anderer Stelle wurde bereits darauf hingewiesen, dass im Zuge einer bürgerlichen Ästhetik die Affizierung des Betrachters durch die vom Künstler wiedergegebene Mimik oberstes Kriterium der Beurteilung werden musste.²⁶ Hier soll nun aber nicht das Verhältnis von Produktion und Rezeption ins Zentrum gestellt werden, sondern jenes von Eidos und Ethos, von innerer Haltung und Kunstproduktion, das bei Messerschmidt von ganz besonderer Prägung ist.²⁷

²² Benke C., *Unterscheidung der Geister bei Bernhard von Clairvaux* 124.

²³ Dahingehend die Unterscheidung bei Bernhard von Clairvaux; Benke C., *Unterscheidung der Geister bei Bernhard von Clairvaux* 147.

²⁴ Benke C., *Unterscheidung der Geister bei Bernhard von Clairvaux* 149.

²⁵ Benke C., *Unterscheidung der Geister bei Bernhard von Clairvaux* 186. Umgekehrt ist demjenigen, der unter der Wirkung des Bösen steht, ein dunkles, trauriges Antlitz eigen (201).

²⁶ Gampp A.C., „Als Kunstwerke wahre Meisterwerke“ 31.

²⁷ Das Problem von Eidos und Ethos besagt, dass die innere Haltung sich im äußeren Ausdruck niederschlägt.

Um aber den theoretischen Aspekt zu Ende zu führen: Das Wirken der (guten wie bösen) Geister lässt letztendlich den richtigen Weg erkennen. Welcher Weg allerdings ist der richtige? Der richtige Weg führt natürlich zur Erkenntnis Gottes hin. Bei Messerschmidt äußert es sich in der Einsicht in die richtigen Proportionen. Die Proportionen sind dabei Bestandteil eines emanistischen Systems, mittels dessen sich die göttliche Natur enthüllt. An dieser Stelle geht das scholastische Denken in einem arkanen auf bzw. in ein arkanes über.

Die beiden von Nicolai erwähnten Titel, von Adam Michael Birkholz *Die sieben heiligen Grundsäulen der Ewigkeit und der Zeit* und Johann Conrad Dippels *Microcosmische Vorspiele des neuen Himmels und der Erde*, mögen hier als Wegweiser herangezogen werden, denn auch wenn Messerschmidt sie nicht selbst rezipiert hat, so müssen sie nach der Assoziation Nicolais doch das Grundproblem erfassen. Vor allem bei Birkholz wird ständig das Wirken der guten und bösen Geister verhandelt.²⁸ Birkholz ist dabei nichts weiter als ein Compendium von Werken anderer Autoren. So zitiert er u.a. auch den im England des 17. Jahrhunderts philosophierenden Robert Fludd mit folgendem Absatz:

Man muß wissen: daß das große Buch der Natur unzählig viele kleinere in sich begreift, welche mit Siegeln oder Bezeichnungen, welche die sichtbare Gestalt des Geschöpfes ausmachen, versiegelt sind. Denn die äußerliche Gestalt des Geschöpfes ist gleichsam die Schale oder Kapsel eines jeden besondern Naturbuches, welche mit Klugheit weggenommen, und das Verborgene offenbar gemacht werden muß, wenns möglich seyn soll, seinen Schatz zu entdecken, und die verborgenen Bezeichnungen seiner Natur zu lesen und zu verstehen.²⁹

Die Kunstproduktion Messerschmidts

Legt man nun dieses Wissen nochmals zur Prüfung an Messerschmidts Charakterköpfe an, so lässt sich folgendes erkennen: Messerschmidts Verfahren zur Eruierung der richtigen Proportionen und damit zur Erkenntnis dessen, „was die Welt im innersten zusammenhält“, ist

²⁸ Birkholz A.M., *Die sieben heiligen Grundsäulen der Ewigkeit und der Zeit* (Leipzig: 1783) 19 (von den bösen Geistern). Während Birkholz hauptsächlich die guten Geister erwähnt, argumentiert Dippel hingegen argumentiert stärker mit den Elementen und ihrer Wirkung.

²⁹ Birkholz A.M., *Die sieben heiligen Grundsäulen der Ewigkeit und der Zeit* (Leipzig: 1783) 35.

einesteils ein emanistisches Verfahren. Durch Selbstexperimentation dringt er immer tiefer in das von ihm entdeckte Geheimnis ein. Aber das Verfahren hat noch eine andere Seite. Zugleich nämlich geht damit ein Purgierungseffekt einher. Diese beiden Seiten – Erkenntnis und Reinigung – mischen sich in der Selbstkasteiung, mittels derer Messerschmidt seinem Geheimnis auf den Grund geht und sich gleichzeitig den Geist der Proportionen fernhält.

Am deutlichsten wird das in einer kleinen Serie sogenannter Schnabelköpfe [Abb. 2].³⁰ Als Nicolai Messerschmidt besucht, sind davon zwei vollendet. Nicolai beschreibt den Sachverhalt wie folgt:

Man stelle sich vor, daß alle Knochen und Muskeln eines menschlichen Gesichts so zusammen gedrückt und vorwärts gezogen wären, daß die äusserste Spitze der Nase mit der höchsten Spitze der zurückgeschobenen Stirn und der äußersten Spitze des hervorgedrückten Kinnknochens einen Winkel von 20 Grad macht, daß also das Gesicht beynahe in die Form eines Schnabels gezogen ist, obgleich doch immer die menschliche Gestalt bleibt. Da ich merkte, daß M. diese Bilder nur kurz mit starren Augen betrachtete, und gleich das Gesicht abwandte, so fragte ich mit der größten Behutsamkeit, was diese vorstellen sollten. M. schien ungern die Erklärung geben zu wollen, und seine sonst lebhaften Augen wurden ganz gläsern, indem er mit abgebrochenen Worten antwortete. Er sagte: „Jener (nemlich der Geist) habe ihn gezwickt, und er habe ihn wieder gezwickt, bis die Figuren herausgekommen wären. Er habe gedacht: Ich will dich doch endlich wohl zwingen; aber er wäre beynahe darüber des Todes gewesen.“ Ich merkte aus allem, daß diese Karikaturen menschlicher Gesichter eigentlich die Gestalten waren, unter denen die betrogene Phantasie des armen M. sich die Geister der Verhältnisse vorstellte, die ihn vermeintlich deshalb quälten, weil er, wie es ihm seine betrogene Eitelkeit vorbildete, so tief in die Geheimnisse der Verhältnisse, wodurch die Geister könnten gezwungen werden, eingedrungen wäre.³¹

Messerschmidt schien dabei vom Glauben getrieben, er könne durch Selbstkasteiung – wie oben ausgeführt – zugleich diesen Geist überwinden und in das Geheimnis der Proportionen tiefer eindringen. Der Geist bildet eine Barriere, die es zu überwinden gilt. Wenn Messerschmidt sich kneift, kann er das Hindernis überwinden, der Geist lässt ihn in Ruhe, und er dringt zu einer tieferen Wahrheit vor. Sie teilt ihm mit, welche

³⁰ Im Nachlass wurden 69 Köpfe gefunden, verschiedene sind jedoch heute verschollen. Der vollständige Katalog der bekannten Köpfe bei Pötzl-Malikova, *Messerschmidt* 241–266 (Nrn. 69–123).

³¹ Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* 417.



Abb. 2. Zweiter Schnabelkopf (Nr. 6 der Serie der „Charakterköpfe“, nach 1770), Büste, bräunlich fleckiger Alabaster, Höhe 43 cm. Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien, Inv. Nr. 5640. Aus Ausstellungskatalog *F.X. Messerschmidt* (Wien: 2002) 183.

Teile des Gesichtes mit welchen Teilen des Körpers korrespondieren.³² Dass an diesem Punkte die Produktions- in die Wirkungsästhetik umzuschlagen vermag, ist unmittelbar einleuchtend: So, wie Messerschmidt durch körperliche Qual zum Gesichtsausdruck gefunden und diesen im Stein festgehalten hat, so ist jene Qual dem Gesichtsausdruck eingeschrieben und erfasst beim Betrachter umgekehrt auch den ganzen Menschen. Im einem bereits wiedergegeben Zitat kommt das deutlich zum Ausdruck:

Es werde alles in der Welt durch die Proportionen regiert, und wer diejenigen Proportionen an sich erwecke, welche der Proportion des anderen entsprächen oder ihr überlegen wären, müsse Wirkungen hervorbringen, welche der Wirkung des andern entsprechen, oder ihr überlegen seyn müßten.

Von dieser Überlegung ausgehend kann Messerschmidt den Schwierigkeitsgrad steigern. Denn er braucht nicht die ganze Figur, den ganzen Menschen in der Skulptur zu erfassen, sondern er kann sich auf den Kopf beschränken und dort die Verhältnis zum unsichtbaren Rest ausbilden. Die gesamte Serie der ehemals 69 Charakterköpfe, von denen 49 heute noch bekannt sind, besteht ausschließlich aus der Darstellung seines Kopfes mit einem so minimalen Ansatz der Büste, dass aus diesem kein weiteres Bewegungsmoment abgeleitet werden kann. Schultern und erst recht Arme sind weggelassen. Gerade dadurch unterscheiden sie sich von früheren, dem ausklingenden Barock verpflichteten Büsten Messerschmidts.³³ Die sogenannten Charakterköpfe sind aufgrund von Messerschmidts Äußerungen jeweils als ein *pars pro toto* zu verstehen; sie bringen die Befindlichkeit des gesamten Körpers zum Ausdruck.

³² Nicolai F., *Beschreibung einer Reise* 413: „In dieser Tollheit bestätigte ihn ein Engländer, der ihn besuchte, und welcher M. für den einzigen hielt, der auch dieß System verstanden hatte. Er sagte: der Engländer habe, weil er nicht deutsch verstanden, an seinem eigenen Körper die Stelle des Schenkels entblößt gezeigt, welche der Stelle des Kopfes entspräche, die M. eben damals an einem Kopfe bearbeitete; und dieß, setzte er hinzu, habe ihn mit völliger Ueberzeugung durchdrungen, daß sein System ganz unumstößlich richtig wäre. Nun ging er wirklich hiernach zu Werke: er kniff sich, er schnitt Grimassen vor dem Spiegel, und glaubte die bewundernswürdigsten Wirkungen von seiner Herrschaft über die Geister zu erfahren. Er freute sich seines Systems, und beschloß, es durch Abbildung dieser grimassirenden Verhältnisse festzusetzen und auf die Nachwelt zu bringen. Seiner Meinung nach waren es 64 verschiedene Abänderungen der Grimassen.“

³³ Etwa jene von Kaiser Franz I. Stephan von Lothringen und Maria Theresia von 1760 (Pötzl-Malikova M., *Messerschmidt* 218 Nrn. 2, 3) oder des Gerard van Swieten von 1769 (Pötzl-Malikova M., *Messerschmidt* 229f. Nr. 30).

Auf rein künstlerischer Ebene schreitet er damit in einer Entwicklung voran, die seit dem Hochbarock auf eine immer stärkere Reduktion angelegt war, um als besonderen Schwierigkeitsgrad in dieser Reduktion aber ein Maximum an Aussagen über die Gesamterscheinung des Dargestellten mitzuliefern.

Aus diesem Grunde wäre es wohl zu banal und damit fruchtlos, in den einzelnen Gesichtern Proportionsstudien zu betreiben im Sinne eines Körperkanons. Wenn es darum geht, so muss ein entsprechender Kanon im gesamten Körper gesucht werden, wovon der Kopf nur lebhaftester Ausdruck wäre. Freilich scheint Messerschmidt aber überhaupt nicht von einem Kanon im herkömmlichen Sinne zu sprechen. Zwar hat er das Blatt mit der ägyptischen Statue und ihren Maßangaben stets vor Augen, aber aus der Summe seiner Äußerungen heraus muss doch eher von einem Korrespondenzsystem als von einem definierten Körperkanon ausgegangen werden. Bei diesem System finden bestimmte Teile des Körpers ihre Entsprechung, wie umgekehrt bestimmte Teile des Gesichtes auf andere Teile des Körpers wirken.

Kunsttheoretische Implikationen

Messerschmidt hat nur eine sehr rudimentäre, letztlich von arkanen Elementen durchsetzte Kunsttheorie formuliert. Dass in ihr topische Elemente auftreten, ist offenkundig. Sie kann deswegen auch so originell nicht sein. Es fällt nicht immer leicht, jene Anregungen zu benennen, die Messerschmidt aufgegriffen hat. Aber immerhin lässt sich mit einer gewissen Berechtigung eine Beziehung zum kunsttheoretischen Werk des Franz von Scheyb herstellen. Ihn hat Messerschmidt nicht nur gekannt, sondern auch portraitiert.³⁴ Im Traktat *Köremons Natur und Kunst in Gemälden* äußert sich von Scheyb ausführlich zum Problem der Zusammenfügung der Teile zu einem Ganzen.³⁵ Dabei legt er größten Wert auf die richtigen Proportionen, und zwar nach Kriterien wie

³⁴ Zur Verbindung von Messerschmidt und Franz von Scheyb siehe Gampp A.C., „Als Kunstwerke wahre Meisterwerke“ 27f.

³⁵ Scheyb F. von, *Köremons Natur und Kunst in Gemälden, Bildhauereyen, Gebäuden und Kupferstichen, zum Unterricht der Schüler, und Vergnügen der Kenner* (Leipzig-Wien: 1770). Das Thema klingt sowohl im Bd. I, Kapitel X „Von der Richtigkeit des Umrisses und von dem Verhältniß des menschlichen Körpers“ (105–113), als auch in Kapitel XI „Von der Zusammenfügung vieler verschiedener Theile in ein zierliches Ganzes“ an (114–121).

Geschlecht und Alter. Es wird dadurch ein anderes Problem evoziert: dasjenige der Angemessenheit, des Decorum. Dieses Problem wird aber bei Messerschmidt weitgehend ausgeklammert. Jedenfalls lässt sich kaum eine Entsprechung feststellen zwischen den von ihm verwendeten Accessoires wie Hüten und wohl auch Perücken und der damit einhergehende Rolle und einem spezifischen Gesichtsausdruck.

Das glückliche Vereinen der verschiedenen Körperteile geschieht nach von Scheyb, indem man den abgebildeten Körper belebt. Vor allem Gestik dient hier als vortreffliches Mittel.³⁶ Diese wird namentlich als taugliches Mittel der Malerei bestimmt, um eine gewisse Belebung der Bildfiguren zu gewährleisten.³⁷ Messerschmidt scheint eine medien-spezifische Differenz zu machen, wenn er auf jegliche Gestik und selbst auf deren Ansatz durch Wiedergabe der Schultern verzichtet. Denn während nach der Logik von Scheyb die Malerei zwingend auf die Darstellung des ganzen Körpers oder jedenfalls auch der Hände angewiesen ist, um eine Gefühlsregung erkennen zu lassen, ist es der Bildhauerei möglich, sich ganz alleine auf die Wiedergabe des Kopfes zu beschränken. In gewisser Weise wird dadurch das alte Argument eines Wettstreites der Bildenden Künste, jenes von Philostrat in den *Eikones* geäußerte, demzufolge nur durch den Einsatz der Farbe Affekte darzustellen seien,³⁸ entkräftet, ja widerlegt.

Messerschmidt gelingt es im Gegensatz dazu in bewundernswürdiger Weise, in der Reduktion auf Kopf und Gesicht und unter Verzicht auf

³⁶ *Köremons Natur und Kunst* I 266: „Denn Cicero sagt: Die Action oder die Geberde ist die Rede des Leibes.“ I 268: „Die Hände sind das Hauptwerkzeug der Geberden; wir brauchen sie, die Sachen gemeinlich vorzustellen, die wir empfinden, oder von denen wir reden.“

³⁷ Das war übrigens schon in der Theorie der Renaissance der Fall, siehe etwa Alberti L.B., *Della Pittura* (*Über die Malkunst*), hrsg. O. Bätschmann – S. Gianfreda (Darmstadt: 2002) § 40 129ff; oder Vinci L. da, *Trattato della Pittura* (*Traktat von der Malerei*), übers. H. Ludwig, hrsg. M. Herzfeld (Jena: 1925 [Nachdruck München: 1989]) 115f.; Rehm U., *Stumme Sprache der Bilder* (Berlin: 2002).

³⁸ Philostrat, *Eikones* (*Die Bilder*), hrsg. und übers. O. Schönberger (Zürich-München: 1968) 84f.: „Die Bildhauerei nun hat viele Arten: so das Bilden selbst wie das Nachbilden in Erz und das Behauen des weißen oder des Parischen Marmors, auch das Schnitzen in Elfenbein und wahrlich auch die Kunst, Gemmen zu schneiden. Die Malerei aber arbeitet mit Farben, doch nicht nur dies ist ihr Werk, sondern sie weiß auch aus diesem einzigen Mittel mehr zu machen als eine andere Kunst aus ihren vielen; denn sie zeigt Licht und Schatten und kennt den Blick, der beim Rasenden anders ist als beim Leidenden oder Frohen. Auch den jeweils verschiedenen Glanz der Augen kann ein Bildhauer kaum wiedergeben, die Malkunst jedoch kennt ein feuriges, ein helles und ein schwarzes Auge, kennt auch blondes Haar und feuerfarbenes und sonnenhelles [...]“

die Farbe doch Affekte wiederzugeben. In seinen Augen und nach seiner Aussage ist das möglich, weil er von jenem von ihm selbst ergründeten System profitieren kann. Dank diesem System spiegelt sich im Gesicht die Wirkung eines ganz entfernten Körperteiles präzise wieder.

Bedauerlicherweise gibt uns Messerschmidt keinen Schlüssel im Sinne einer genauen Zuordnung von Ausdruck und Körperpartie. Bald sind es die Schenkel, bald eine Partie unterhalb der Rippen, die er bemüht, um den gewünschten Ausdruck zunächst in sein Gesicht und dann vermittels eines Spiegels in die Skulptur zu bekommen. Das hieraus abzuleitende Verhältnis von Produktions- und Rezeptionsästhetik hat von Scheyb ebenfalls schon formuliert, unter Berufung auf Aristoteles: „Aristoteles sagt, der Poet müsse während der Arbeit die Actionen und Bewegungen derjenigen, welche er reden läßt, selbst nachahmen. Denn es ist gewiß, daß unter zween Menschen von gleichem Genie, derjenige, welcher am meisten empfindet, und in die Leidenschaft eindringet, auch jederzeit am meisten überzeugen wird. Der Beweis liegt am Tage: denn derjenige, welcher selbst gerührt ist, bewegt auch diejenigen, die ihm zuhören; und derjenige, der wirklich zornig ist, erweckt auch die nämlichen Regungen im Herzen seiner Zuschauer.“³⁹

Es wäre nun ein leichtes, Messerschmidts Bemerkungen überzuleiten in den Bereich jener arkanen Geheimwissenschaften, wo ein Verhältnis zwischen Mikrokosmos und Makrokosmos hergestellt wird. In einem der beiden von Nicolai selbst erwähnen Titel ist das hinreichend der Fall. Dippel beschreibt in den *Microcosmischen Vorspielen des neuen Himmels* ganz explizit, dass sich Gott in den Kreaturen offenbaren wolle und man seine Natur deswegen durch Untersuchung der Kreaturen geöffnet bekommen.⁴⁰ Durch die Erkenntnis der richtigen Proportionen, d.h. der richtigen Verhältnisse insgesamt, kommt der Künstler also zu einer eigentlichen Gottesschau. Doch ist dieser Sachverhalt für Messerschmidt nur bedingt relevant. Auch Lavaters physiognomische Studien hatten bekanntlich das Ziel, aus der Fülle aller Gesichter jenes

³⁹ Köremons *Natur und Kunst* I 274f. Von Scheyb fährt an gleicher Stelle fort mit einem Verweis auf Horaz: „Horaz hat dieses schon deutlich ausgedrückt, wenn er sagt: ‚Man lacht mit den Lachenden, sagt er, und vergießet Thränen, wenn andre traurig sind; darum, wenn der Zuhörer weinen soll, so muß vorher der Poet selbst den Schmerz schon empfunden haben; und so wird das Mitleiden erweckt.‘“ Der Beginn der Passage wurde bekanntlich fast in identischer Weise von Alberti L.B., *Della Pittura* § 41 übernommen.

⁴⁰ Dippel J.C., *Microcosmische Vorspiele* 16f. (§24).

Urgesicht extrahieren zu können, welches dasjenige Gottes in seinem Sohne Christus wäre.⁴¹

Doch mit Lavaters Bemühen hat Messerschmidts Unterfangen nichts gemeinsam. Es geht Messerschmidt ja ganz offensichtlich nicht um das „perfekte“ Gesicht als *tertium comparationis* verschiedenster Gesichter. Vielmehr zeigt er ja sein eigenes Gesicht in immer anderer Grimasierung.

Es hat den Anschein, als wollten hier verschiedene Elemente zu einem merkwürdigen Konglomerat zusammenwachsen. Auf der einen Seite das Bemühen, die richtigen Proportionen zu entdecken. Auf der anderen Seite aber auch der Versuch, dem quälenden Einfluss des Geistes der Proportionen entgegenzuwirken. In diesen beiden Aspekten verbirgt sich ein Grundproblem arkaner Logik, das Dippel in dem schon mehrfach zitierten Werk so in Worte gefasst hat:

Ob wir aber gleich in dieser Zeit über unsere inwendige und in unserm Staube wohnende Affecten, Lüste und Begierden oft victorisiren, so können wir doch nicht gänzlich über dieselbe triumphiren, bis der Streit zu Ende ist. So lange wir noch im Streite stehen, können wir wohl von Victorie sagen, aber von keinem Triumph, denn die Erbsünde, welche dermaleinst den Triumph eigentlich geben soll, reget sich noch immer bey uns, und will agiren.⁴²

In letzter Instanz dürfte den Charakterköpfen Messerschmidts zunächst im Produktionsakt eine purgierende Wirkung innewohnen. Alleine schon, weil es dazu der Selbstkasteiung bedarf, aber auch, weil sich der Künstler nur allmählich und in immer anderen Ausprägungen dem Ziel nähern kann, nämlich in das Geheimnis der Proportionen zutiefst einzudringen. Indem er sich selber immer wieder zum Ausgangspunkt seiner Suche macht, kann er – in seiner Sicht – immer tiefer in die arkanen Verhältnisse der Welt eindringen und schließlich die Zusammenhänge zwischen den Teilen des Körpers und des Gesichtes und damit letztlich einen Teil einer göttlichen Logik und Ordnung aufschlüsseln. Die Arbeit ist aber auch ein Mittel, um den quälenden Geist der Proportion fernzuhalten und in gewisser Weise unschädlich zu machen. Es zeigt sich darin auch etwas von jenem bei Dippel erwähnten Kampf, der im Sieg, aber nicht im Triumph endet.

⁴¹ Siehe Althaus K., „Die Unerreichbarkeit des wahren Bildnis Christi“, in: Ausstellungskatalog *Das Antlitz – eine Obsession: Johann Caspar Lavater* (Zürich: 2001) 194–204.

⁴² Dippel J.C., *Microcosmische Vorspiele* 83 (§ 125).

Im Rezeptionsakt tritt jenes, was in der Produktion eingeflossen ist, idealiter auch wieder hervor. Der Betrachter soll nicht nur vom Ausdruck affiziert werden,⁴³ er soll wohl auch den gesamtkörperlichen Eindruck erfahren, der damit einhergeht, und er soll – das wäre wohl der Weisheit letzter Schluss – auch in gleicher Weise zu jener Erkenntnis geführt werden, die nicht anders denn als Gotteserkenntnis bezeichnet werden kann.

Hier lohnt es sich, nochmals auf Zedlers Definition zurückzublicken. Die feinste Ausformung des Geistes im Menschen nämlich ist die Idee, die entweder individuell durch das Ingenium geschaut wird oder generell im Iudicium ihre Glaubwürdigkeit findet. Angelegt auf die Messerschmidtschen Charakterköpfe wäre das Verhältnis wie folgt zu denken: Gott hat sich in der Idee (der richtigen Proportionen) emaniert, er wird durch das Ingenium Messerschmidts in dieser Form erkannt, in den Charakterköpfen umgesetzt und dadurch Bestandteil allgemeiner Erkenntnis, des Iudicium. Der böse Geist der Proportionen ist eigentlich nur die Kehrseite dieses Vorganges, mit ihm aber ursächlich verbunden. Ganz im Sinne einer scholastischen Auffassung treibt er, der selbst die allegorisierte Form jenes verborgenen Wissens ist, das Wissen um die richtigen Proportionen nur voran, anstatt es zu verhindern. Vor diesem Hintergrund gewinnt der Begriff des Ingeniums, der in der Kunsttheorie längst seinen festen Platz hat,⁴⁴ eine neue Dimension. Standen nach klassischer Kunsttheorie als mögliche Wirkungen auf den Betrachter die aus der Rhetorik übernommenen Wirkungen des Erkennens, Erfreuens und Bewegens zur Verfügung, so erweitert sich der Reigen nun um ein gewichtiges erkenntnistheoretisches Moment: Der Künstler wirkt durch sein Ingenium als direkter Mittler zwischen arkanem göttlichem Wissen und dem Publikum. Dessen Iudicium muss in der Folge auch auf das richtige Verstehen der Idee ausgerichtet sein und nicht allein auf eine kennerschaftliche Beurteilung der Kunstwerke. Einer kennerschaftlichen Beurteilung entziehen sich die Charakterköpfe ohnehin, weil der in ihnen wiedergegebene „Affekt“ sich in den seltensten Fällen bestimmen lässt. Die lächerlichen Titel, die den einzelnen Köpfen im Nachgang zu

⁴³ Siehe zu dieser Wechselwirkung Busch W., *Das sentimentalische Bild. Die Krise der Kunst im 18. Jahrhundert und die Geburt der Moderne* (München: 1993); Gebauer G. – Wulf C., *Mimesis* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: 1992) 216.

⁴⁴ Siehe etwa „Ingegno“, in: Grassi L. – Pepe M., *Dizionario dei termini artistici* (Turin: 1994) 424f.

einem öffentlichen Aufruf 1793 zugedacht wurden,⁴⁵ haben künstlich versucht, einzelne Affekte assoziativ zu definieren. Zieht man jedoch von Scheyb bei, so ist der Kanon möglicher Affekte recht genau definiert.⁴⁶ Ihm entspricht keiner der Charakterköpfe Messerschmidts. Er selbst hat übrigens – wie oben seiner Aussage zu entnehmen – alles getan, um den natürlichen Affekt zu vereiteln, indem er die Lippen nach Möglichkeit nicht darstellte. Zwar vermerkt von Scheyb, auch Tiere könnten sehr wohl im Äußeren ihre innere Befindlichkeit zum Ausdruck bringen.⁴⁷ Doch Messerschmidt reduziert auch hier willentlich die Palette der zur Verfügung stehenden Möglichkeiten. Nach von Scheyb lassen sich auch nur drei Hauptleidenschaften ausmachen: Zorn, Begierde und Vernunft.⁴⁸ Der Versuch, nach ihnen die Charakterköpfe gliedern zu wollen, ist von vornherein zum Scheitern verurteilt. Zwar möchte Messerschmidt wohl Ausdruck und damit verbunden Wirkung erzeugen, aber eben nicht, um in der Art des sentimentalischen Bildes zu affizieren, sondern als Mittel der Erkenntnis. Auf diesem Wege spielt sogar sein Geist der Proportionen eine eminente Rolle.

⁴⁵ Pötzl-Malikova M., *Messerschmidt* 68f., 120 (Anm. 524).

⁴⁶ *Orestrio von den drei Künsten der Zeichnung* (Wien: 1774) I 185 beschreibt eine gewisse Palette an Affekten. Inwieweit eine Abhängigkeit zu *Expressions des passions* von Le Brun besteht, kann hier nicht geklärt werden.

⁴⁷ *Köremons Natur und Kunst* 77f.

⁴⁸ *Köremons Natur und Kunst* 78.

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